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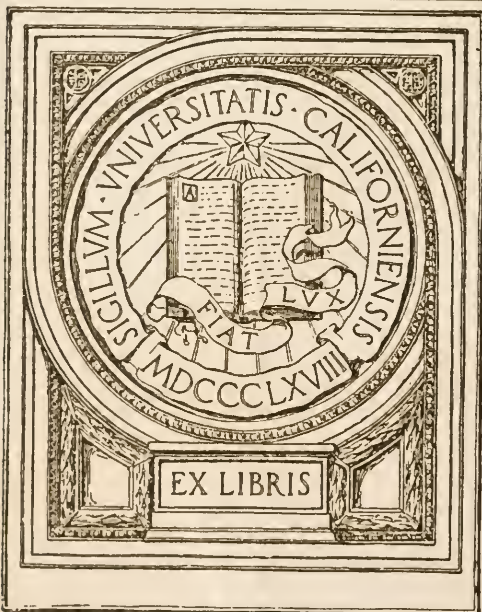

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STANDARD LITERATURE SERIES

POEMS OF KNIGHTLY ADVENTURE

SELECTED AND EDITED
WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

EDWARD EVERETT HALE, JR., PH.D.
PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC AND LOGIC, UNION COLLEGE

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PREFATORY NOTE.

In this volume have been brought together four poems of knightly adventure. In *Gareth and Lynette* we have Tennyson's idealization of the knight of chivalry; in *Sohrab and Rustum* we have the Persian hero ; *Horatius* is the type of the old Roman of the Republic ; in *The Vision of Sir Launfal* Lowell has expressed a modern conception of knightliness. The poems are worth reading together.

They are also worth comparing in the matter of poetic style. The particular point of style here discussed is Figurative Language. Other volumes in this series deal with Poetic Diction and Metre, but short notes on those topics are given here. These discussions of style may, in parts, perhaps be thought too difficult for pupils ; but there is nothing that the teacher cannot understand and explain. It is generally better to make the pupil use his intelligence to the uttermost than to simplify a matter for easy comprehension, and in so doing drain all the real sense out of it.

Edward E. Hale, Jr.

Union College.

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INTRODUCTION.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES.

Tennyson.—The life of Tennyson, like that of many poets, was in the ordinary sense of the word uneventful. To one who knows the poet's work a recital of his books and their times of publishing would indicate the growth of the poet's mind and artistic power, but the ordinary reader will not see their significance. Still, a record of names and dates will be convenient for reference, if nothing more.

Alfred Tennyson was born August 6, 1809, at Somerby Rectory, Lincolnshire. His father, himself something of a poet and an artist, was the village rector. Of his brothers, Frederick and Charles had also the poetic gift. Alfred received his university preparation from his father, and in 1828 went to Trinity College, Cambridge. He had already, with his brother Charles, published a volume entitled *Poems by Two Brothers*, and in the university he won the Chancellor's Medal for the best English poem.

His first volume was published in 1830 : it was called *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical.* In it we can now recognize Tennyson's qualities; but it was not till his second collection, *Poems* (1832), that we have any of his well-known work. His poems were rather sharply criticised in some quarters as being effeminate and sentimental, but he had made a name for himself as a poet of exquisite workmanship and remarkable power of melodious effect. In 1842 came another volume, containing many well-known poems, and in 1847 *The Princess : a Medley.* In 1850, on the death of Wordsworth, he was already so highly esteemed as to be appointed Poet Laureate. In the same year he published *In Memoriam*, in 1855 *Maud*, and in 1864 *Enoch Arden.*

In 1859 he published four poems entitled *Idylls of the King.* They were independent poems, and yet each dealt with the same group of characters, the knights and ladies of the court of King

Arthur. To these four poems, Tennyson in the next twenty-five years added others (see p. 10), intended each to take a definite place in the completed poem which constitutes his greatest work. *Gareth and Lynette* stands first of the poems after the introduction, but it was published in 1872, next to the last.[1]

The chief works of the poet's later years were dramas. In these he was not so successful as in his earlier poems; but some of his later lyric poetry, in *Tiresias* (1886), *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After* (1886), and *Demeter and Other Poems* (1889), has been thought to show his old mastery.

Matthew Arnold.—Thomas Arnold was the famous head master of Rugby, one of the great English public schools. Matthew Arnold, born at Laleham, December 24, 1822, some few years before his father was called to Rugby, was therefore educated under the most favorable circumstances of his time. He passed a year at Winchester, and then four at Rugby, and took his degree at Oxford in 1844. He was a distinguished student, and before going up to the university he gained a Balliol scholarship ; at Oxford he became distinguished for his literature, and gained the Newdigate Prize for the best poem, as Tennyson had gained the Chancellor's Medal at Cambridge some years before. To Education in its broader sense and to Literature, Matthew Arnold's life was devoted. In 1851 he was appointed one of the Inspectors of Schools, an office which he held for the rest of his life, working to improve the schools of England directly, and also examining the educational systems of other countries. But he also devoted himself to what we may call Education in its broader sense, for his books and essays had always the aim of arousing and stimulating a higher and finer intellectual tone in England.

His first devotion, however, was poetry. His first volume, *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems*, was published in 1848, a few years after his leaving the university ; the second, *Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems*, in 1852. *Sohrab and Rustum* appeared first in *Poems : a New Edition*, 1853. Matthew Arnold was a poet of very exquisite and distinguished character : we shall see later some of the fine qualities of his work. His poetry is appreciated and cared for by such as know the best; but he exerts his widest influence in his prose.

[1] Balin and Balan, the last (1885), is not found in earlier editions of the *Idylls*.

It was not for ten years and more after he had become known as a poet that Matthew Arnold found what we may call his true or his chief vocation, that of the critic of literature. In 1857 he was elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford, and in 1861 and 1862 he published his lectures *On Translating Homer.* From that time on he constantly wrote and published books and essays on a considerable range of subjects, but all tending toward the arousing a better intellectual feeling in the life of England, literary, religious and political. Matthew Arnold has been a great influence in the latter half of the nineteenth century : besides Carlyle and Ruskin, no contemporary man of letters has exerted such a power on men's thoughts.

Macaulay.—Thomas Babington Macaulay is probably more often thought of as a brilliant essayist than as a poet. Yet we must remember that he was also a historian, an orator, a politician, an administrator—in fact a man of immense intellectual power, whose energy took various forms. His poems have excellences of which we shall learn later, but they are not his chief work.

He was born November 26, 1800, and died December 28, 1859. He was a precocious child, remarkable for inordinate love of reading and for his immense memory. These characteristics remained with him through life, and serve to explain much about his work. He was educated at a private school and at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he made much the same sort of reputation that came to him afterward in the larger world. On leaving the university, he read law and was called to the bar. But it does not appear that he ever meant to make the law his serious profession. In 1825 his article on Milton appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*, the chief periodical of the time, and from then on he was a man of letters He became at once well known : his writings aroused so much interest that in 1830 he was elected to Parliament.

Macaulay was always a prominent man in Parliament, although he is not to be thought of as a great statesman. He took a vigorous part in the Reform Law debates of 1831; he was named member of the Supreme Council for India, and passed five years in Calcutta, busy with the administration of that great country ; he was even Secretary of War in the Melbourne Cabinet of 1840,

and Postmaster General in 1846. But his real importance is as a man of letters. His *Essays* were published in the *Edinburgh Review* from 1825 to 1844 and in the Encyclopædia Britannica ; his *History of England* appeared in 1849 and 1855 ; *The Lays of Ancient Rome* in 1842. In 1857 he was created a peer, with the title Baron Macaulay of Rothesay.

Macaulay's work is chiefly historical. Even when writing on literary subjects he is better at history than at criticism. The historic imagination which has made the *History of England* as entertaining a book as was ever published is easily seen in the *Lays*.

Lowell.—James Russell Lowell was one of our most distinguished men of letters ; whether most noted as a poet or an essayist, it would be hard to say. He was also a scholar, and he represented the United States as Minister to Spain and afterwards to England.

He was born of a well-known New England family at Cambridge, February 22, 1819, and was educated at a Cambridge school and at Harvard. He was not especially distinguished as a student, but was already known to his fellow-students at least for his literary taste and his poetic gifts. Having no Chancellor's Medal or Newdigate Prize to contest for, Lowell had to be content with the position of Class Poet. He began the study of the law, went through the law school, and opened an office in Boston, but he never practised the profession. In 1841 appeared his first volume of poems, some of them rather youthful productions, but others having promise of his future eminence.

He became intensely interested in the generous movements of his time, especially the efforts looking toward the abolition of slavery. He lived in Cambridge, and wrote much in the anti-slavery journals. In 1848 he gathered a number of vigorous satires under the title of *The Biglow Papers*. We read the book now as literature, and find it amusing ; but the poems were written for a purpose, and they did their work. In the same year he published also *A Fable for Critics*, a satire of another sort—a good-humored review of American literature. It was in this same year, too, that he published *Sir Launfal*.

In 1855 Longfellow resigned his position of Professor of Modern Languages at Harvard. The chair was offered to Lowell and

accepted by him. As Longfellow had done, he went abroad to study, and in 1857 began his work. In the same year was founded the *Atlantic Monthly*, and of this magazine Lowell was the editor for four years.

As the Civil War went on, Lowell expressed himself again in satire, and in 1867 appeared the second volume of the *Biglow Papers*. Two years after, in *Under the Willows*, appeared his more serious poetry of the exciting years just passed.

Lowell now began to gather together his essays and other writings in prose. In 1870 was published *Among My Books;* in 1871, *My Study Windows*; in 1876, the second series of *Among My Books*. In 1877 he was named Minister to Spain ; in 1880, Minister to England. His last publications were *Democracy* in 1886, *Political Essays* (1888), and *Heartsease and Rue*, in the same year—a collection of his last poems. He died August 12, 1891.

INTRODUCTIONS TO THE POEMS.

Gareth and Lynette.—*The Idylls of the King* is the longest and, in some respects, the chief of Tennyson's poems. The poem as a whole presents the career of King Arthur, the famous legendary King of England in the very, very old days. It would take too much time to discuss whether there ever was any such king as Arthur ; it seems probable that there was a Keltic chief of similar name, from whose deeds arose afterward the famous legends. More important is it to know that throughout the Middle Ages King Arthur was one of the great heroes of romance. Many were the tales of him and his knights. He was fabled to have been ruler over all England, to have subdued the heathen Saxons and even the Romans, and to have brought the whole land to order under his rule. The adventures of Arthur and his knights were favorite subjects for the poets of the Middle Ages, both in England and in France. The last and best known of our English romances is *Le Morte d'Arthur* of Thomas Malory (1485), in which are gathered into one book the tales of many an old romance and poem. Here it is that Tennyson generally finds the legends which give the foundation to *The Idylls of the King.* The story of Gareth is told in Book VII of *Le Morte d'Arthur*—

"the tale of Syr Gareth of Orkney, that was called Beaumains," that is, Fair-hands.

Tennyson takes King Arthur as the type of true manhood: he takes him as representative of the soul within us, striving with the evil of the world. He even gives the poem an allegoric turn, although this is something we need not study just now. *The Coming of Arthur* [1] tells us how he came to his throne and of his marriage. Then come ten poems telling of the deeds, good and evil, of his knights. *The Passing of Arthur* [1] tells us of his last great battle, and how he was borne away from earth to be cured of his grievous wounds.

Of the tales of Arthur's Knights, the story of Gareth comes first: it is a story of the fresh, youthful nobility of Arthur's knighthood when at their best. Gareth is the very flower of young, honorable manhood. No work is too low and vulgar if commanded by his mother; no duty too great and too trying if commanded by his king. Disgrace lies only in drawing back from honor, for disgraceful deeds never come to his mind. His temper is strong, honest, self-reliant, and full of good-humor and hearty helpfulness. He pushes through every difficulty and surmounts every obstacle.

His adventure is the type of knight errantry: he meets the oppressive ruffians and delivers the innocent lady. In his adventure the poet has suggested, in allegoric fashion; the struggle of every one in this world. The glittering and brilliant Knight of the Morning Star represents the temptations of youth; the fierce and blazing Noonday Sun stands for the less alluring but stronger passions of middle age; the Evening Star stands for the evil habits fixed by the weakness of a lifetime. At the end is Death, made more terrible by everything that can work on the imagination; but, when courageously met, he is found less awful than one could believe. Such is the significance, more or less obvious, of the adventure; and it may be a pleasure to us afterward to remember the symbolism. Still the story is the story without it, and the poem has its own spirit and beauty.

The Idylls of the King, and *Gareth and Lynette*, as much as any of them, are examples of Tennyson's best workmanship in poems of a narrative character. The name "Idyll" would seem

[1] See "Enoch Arden and Other Poems," No. 6 of this series.

to have been chosen by the poet as meaning a picture-poem, carefully and elaborately finished. The separate poems are certainly examples of the richest and fullest art.

Sohrab and Rustum.—As it appears in Arnold's works the poem is called "an episode." That is, it is given to us as though it were part of a longer poem—as, for instance, Scott might have published only the story of the meeting and combat between Fitz-James and Roderick Dhu, which as it now stands is a part of *The Lady of the Lake*. We are not to think, however, that Arnold ever had in mind the complete poem, of which this should have been a part. Tennyson, in writing *Morte d'Arthur* in 1842, spoke of it half seriously as part of an unpublished poem. *The Idylls of the King* was not completed till forty years and more afterward; but as it stands now, that earlier fragment has its place in it.[1] Matthew Arnold never contemplated a sustained epic of this character; his desire was to write a shorter poem in epic fashion.

Hence, although called an episode, *Sohrab and Rustum* is practically complete in itself, like *Gareth and Lynette*, for instance. It is true that we can imagine it part of a longer poem, but on the other hand the poem tells us practically all we want to know. A word or two may, perhaps, be needful before beginning, about the story and the characters.

The story is not original with the poet. It is a Persian story, a part of the great *Epic of Kings*—a long poem by Firdausi, relating the deeds of the great heroes of Persia, of whom Rustum was the chief. If Matthew Arnold had translated this part of the poem, it would have been a little more accurately called an episode. As it was, he took the story and told it in English verse.

As is gradually unfolded in the poem as we have it, Rustum, the son of Zal, had, in earlier adventurous journeys, married a beautiful maiden, but had shortly been separated from her by some knightly exploit. His wife had remained with her father, and a child was born to her. Fearing that the adventurous hero, if he knew he had a son, would come and take him from her, the mother sent word that a daughter had been born to them. With not unnatural barbaric brutality, Rustum, in chagrin at not having a son who might be brought up to knightly deeds,

[1] *Passing of Arthur*, ll. 170–440, in "Enoch Arden and Other Poems" in this series.

abandoned his wife and heard no more of her. She, however, brought up her son, who was strong and noble, and became one of the great warriors of Afrasiab, the Tartar king. The young champion, knowing himself the son of Rustum, ever seeks his father. The poem begins on the occasion of a great invasion of Persia by the Tartars—Sohrab among them, not their leader, but their most brilliant champion. Rustum, according to common report, is not with the Persian army : disgusted at the ungrateful Kai Khosroo, he is thought to have retired to his home, where he lived with his father, Zal.

Horatius.—As Gareth is the type of the medieval knight errant, so we may consider Horatius the type of the old Roman knight and gentleman.

In the ancient histories of Rome are many stories which we know cannot be entirely true. Romulus and Remus, for instance, twins born of a maiden and a god, were exposed in the Tiber and brought up by a she-wolf. Of course, whatever fact may be at the bottom of the story has been exaggerated and changed. In the oldest days of Rome, the great deeds of the Romans were preserved in many a popular legend and story and in songs and ballads—known to all, and sung at festivals and on great occasions. To tell the truth, the real historic records of the earliest days were destroyed in the wars and violence of the time. But ballads and popular songs never trouble to be accurate ; they give a striking account of the fact, and are content even if they are not strictly correct in their details. So the early history of Rome lived in a ballad-literature, which, as it existed only in the mouths of the poets, was gradually forgotten on the appearance of the more formal written literature that we know—the literature of Terence and Plautus, of Horace and Vergil, of Livy and Tacitus.

Macaulay was greatly interested in this idea of a popular poetry, preserved in the memory of popular poets and preserving the fame of the great deeds of great Romans. His imagination, here as always (p. 18), worked to make the idea real to him : he imagined for himself what such old poetry might have been, and wrote the *Lays of Ancient Rome.* It is not necessary for us to have much historical knowledge of the matter : it is probable that the only historic fact in the whole was the invasion by Porsena, which Tacitus says was entirely successful, and not repulsed at

all. But that need not trouble us ; the point is that we have here, that Macaulay had in mind, a piece of simple and stirring ballad-poetry, such as we may read in our own tongue.

Of course Macaulay was not a simple old balladist, however ; and so his poem is not precisely a ballad. Just as Sir Walter Scott, in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, or in *Marmion*, wrote a poem full of the life and spirit of the old ballad-poetry which he knew so well, so Macaulay produced a longer, more polished poem, which should give us later readers some sort of an idea of what the old Roman ballad-poetry was. In his preface to the poem he shows that there probably had been a ballad on Horatius and his defense of the bridge among the old poems which were sung in ancient Rome.

The Vision of Sir Launfal was one of Lowell's early poems. His first poems were published in 1843 ; the *Vision* only five years later. The two things that have made it so widely known as it is are both more characteristic of the poet in his youth than of his later years. The love of nature never left him ; but there is a fresh exuberance of youth to the feeling which created the atmosphere of full, warm summer and of hard, piercing winter. So also is the moral and allegoric character of the poem due to the feeling, strong with Lowell at this time, that his poems must not only please but teach.

On this last matter there is much to say on either side. For my own part, I feel that so plain-spoken a moral will not be very useful to us in the long run; although it will, at the time of reading, appeal to our moral sense, and very possibly make clear to us something that we have already realized but dimly. On the other hand it will be said, Here is a true, a guiding principle of life which can never fail to be of service to us, put in the form of a beautiful poem, which will never be forgotten by one who has once read it with care. Certainly, taking the poem as a strengthener of our moral nature, it ranges other things on the right side ; the full, fresh summer is for us henceforward a sign of open-heartedness ; and even the hard cold of winter will be to us better than the hardness of a cold heart.

This obvious moral element is often thought of as unpoetic : Lowell himself sometimes thought so. Practically, we need not bother ourselves much about the names. If we get pleasure, and

lasting good besides, from the poem, we are so much the richer. But, however we may feel about the moral element, there can be no doubt about the other element of which we spoke—the feeling for the beauty of nature. Not to mention the constant allusions, nor the artistic care with which the feeling of the poem is echoed or contrasted in the descriptions of nature, we may think especially of the two famous passages, the appreciation of summer (ll. 33–70), and the ice-working of the brook (ll. 174–210). These passages unite the keen observation of the lover of nature with the living imagination of the poet.

FIGURES OF SPEECH.

It is not an easy matter to give a good definition of Figure of Speech. The reason for this is that very many kinds of expression have been called "figures of speech" which are really not alike except in the fact that they are not plain, straightforward ways of speaking. But it is not enough to say that a figure of speech is a departure from the ordinary direct mode of expression; for that definition would include many forms of sentence-structure, many variations of diction, which we do not commonly think of as figures. The fact is that the older writers called almost any mode of expression which could not be readily classified otherwise a "figure of speech." The result is that, in the old books on poetry or rhetoric, there sometimes are more than a hundred figures mentioned, each with a long name, and all together making a very confusing collection.

For us it will be enough to understand some of the commoner figures—to know what they are, how they come to be used, and what sort of effect they have. And in doing this we shall not have much difficulty; for, if it be hard to find any common likeness between all the modes of expression that rhetoricians have at one time or another chosen to call "figures of speech," it is not especially hard to learn the chief things about the commoner figures.

A. *Figures Based upon Resemblance.*

One of our commonest habits is to compare one thing with another. Indeed, it is not only the commonest habit, but the

most necessary; for if we did not compare things, and see how they resemble each other and how they differ, we should never really know anything about them. All science is built up on resemblance and difference.

Not only in science, however, but in poetry, is resemblance a common thing. Even in everyday conversation we are always remarking resemblances: "as good as gold," "as firm as a rock," we say; "like lightning," "like a fish." If we can't think of a comparison strong enough, we say, "You never saw anything like it." Comparisons are not a possession of the poet only; everybody uses them. But the poet is always thinking of fresh and beautiful ones; most people use the same old comparisons that have been in the language for years.

But not all comparisons are called figures of speech. There is a difference in the kind of subject-matter. If we say of a boy, "John is as big as an elephant," we should call it a figure. But if we say, "John is as big as his father was at his age," we should not call it a figure, but an ordinary comparison. The difference is that in the latter case we wanted to express with precision an actual fact; we state it in plain, simple words of which the meaning is obvious. In the former case, however, we merely wish to give a striking impression; we mean that John is a very big boy. He is not really as large even as a very small elephant; but we connect the idea of bigness with the elephant, and so we make the comparison, knowing that it will make on the mind a strong impression of size.

This difference is often stated by saying that a simile is the statement of resemblance between things of different kinds, while the resemblance between things of the same kind or class is called simply a comparison. Thus, "John" and "his father at his age" are of the same kind or class—namely, boys; but "John" and "an elephant" are of different kinds. This distinction rather simplifies the actual facts, but it comes near enough to a statement of the case.

In *Gareth and Lynette*, when Bellicent says,

> "Thy father Lot beside the hearth
> Lies like a log, and all but smoulder'd out," ll. 73, 74,

we have a simile; for a man and a log are of different kind. But later, in the line,

> "The three were clad like tillers of the soil," l. 178,

we have but a comparison; for we are merely comparing one kind of man with another.

In poetry we are not so apt to find comparisons as similes; for the poet generally thinks, not so much of stating precise facts as they may happen to exist, but rather of saying what will be suggestive and stirring to the imagination.

We have so far spoken as if all figures of speech based on resemblance were similes. But there are other ways in which we may express a figurative comparison. Suppose we say, "He had no sooner begun the investigation than he was worried by a thousand minor annoyances," and suppose we want to make some figurative comparison.

1. We may state it directly. "He had no sooner begun the investigation than he was worried by a thousand minor annoyances, as a big bear seeking for honey is bothered by a swarm of bees."

2. We may speak of the matter as if it were something else. "He had no sooner poked his nose into the matter than he was assailed by a swarm of bothers that threatened to sting the life out of him."

3. We may state the fact, and then state something else and imply that the two are alike: "He had no sooner begun the investigation than he was worried by a thousand minor annoyances; the bear had roused a swarm of stinging bees."

Of these three ways the first is called a Simile and the second a Metaphor. The third, if it were longer, would be called an Allegory. It is not so common a figure in English as either of the others; but we will call it an Allegory, whether it be long, as a story, or short, as in a single sentence.

It is curious to note that poets and prose-writers as well use these figures very differently. In the first place, some use a great many more than others; Lowell, for instance, may be compared with Macaulay. The *Vision of Sir Launfal* is full of figurative likenesses, expressed or suggested; *Horatius* has hardly

any.[1] This anybody would notice at the first reading; it might not be so obvious that *Sohrab and Rustum* has more figures than *Horatius*, but not so many in proportion to its length as *Gareth and Lynette*, while this last has, proportionately, not nearly so many as *Sir Launfal.*

Let us understand this matter before we go farther. Why does one poet use more figures of comparison than another? Is it because he is more of a poet?

The answer is not quite so simple as that. We may certainly say that a great store of fresh, beautiful figures shows a strong, a poetic imagination. Read *Sir Launfal*, and see how everything suggested to Lowell some figurative comparison. The passage on the frozen brook is as good an example as any other. This shows what would be called "a poetic imagination." But how about the other side? Can an imagination be poetic which does not bring up such comparisons? In Macaulay there is little of all this. We have, not a multitude of short figures, but a few long ones. When Astur falls, under the blow of Horatius, Macaulay thinks of the fall of a mighty tree, and writes:

> "And the great Lord of Luna
> Fell at that deadly stroke,
> As falls on Mount Alvernus
> A thunder-smitten oak.
> Far o'er the crashing forest
> The giant arms lie spread;
> And the pale augurs, muttering low,
> Gaze on the blasted head."

In *Sir Launfal* there is but one comparison of such length (ll. 205–210), and even this is hardly a true simile; but, on the other hand, almost every sentence suggests some figurative comparison. Now, shall we say that Lowell had a greater imagination than Macaulay? Certainly, in one respect, Macaulay had a greater imagination that Lowell; that is, he rarely thought of anything

[1] A direct comparison can be made by actually counting the figures and stating the results in ratios per 1,000 lines. Thus, *Sir Launfal* has about 54 figures (excluding tropes, see p. 21) in 352 lines, which is at the rate of 152 per 1,000. *Horatius* (589 ll.) has 16 per 1,000. We may, then, say that there are about 10 times as many figures in *Sir Launfal* as in *Horatius.*

without its suggesting to him some definite image. Read stanzas iv. and v. of *Horatius*, and see how every town mentioned calls to his mind something definite about it—the giant hold of Volaterræ : Populonia, with the expanse of sea before her ; Pisæ, with its crowded harbor—each one brought to mind by some particular circumstance. Macaulay makes these places real to himself, which is certainly more than Lowell does for the castle of Sir Launfal. Read *Horatius* with this idea in mind, and see what a power Macaulay had of realizing his conceptions.[1] We must allow that, as far as constructive imagination is concerned, Macaulay is the superior.

Let us then, just now at least, not bother ourselves with trying to determine which is the best poet. Let us be satisfied in seeing what kind of poet each one is. We see Macaulay's imagination making everything real and living to him (cf. *Horatius*, ll. 106–121; 168–200) ; we see Lowell's imagination playing about everything that comes to mind, adorning everything with roses, as it were, half-fantastic, exuberant. It will be worth while to read *Sohrab and Rustum*, and *Gareth and Lynette*, to see what you can discover of Tennyson and Arnold. In this respect you will find that Tennyson is more like Lowell, and Arnold more like Macaulay.

So far, however, we have merely thought of figures altogether, without considering their especial kinds. Let us now consider the differences we noted above. Note the following passage :

> "But as a troop of peddlers, from Cabool,
> Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,
> That vast sky-neighboring mountain of milk snow ,
> Crossing so high, that, as they mount, they pass,
> Long flocks of traveling birds dead on the snow,
> Choked by the air, and scarce can they themselves
> Slake their parched throats with sugared mulberries—
> In single file they move, and stop their breath,
> For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging snows—
> So the pale Persians held their breath with fear."
>
> *Sohrab and Rustum*, ll. 160–169.

[1] Of course, this is one of the great characteristics of his prose. Notice, also, what is said (p. 32) of his use of specific words.

Here the picture of the terrified merchants stands out clear and distinct in our minds, and we think how the Persians must have held their breaths at the challenge of Sohrab. But now read this :

> "To weary her ears with one continuous prayer,
> Until she let me fly discaged to sweep
> In ever-highering eagle-circles up
> To the great Sun of Glory, and thence swoop
> Down upon all things base, and dash them dead,
> A knight of Arthur, working out his will,
> To cleanse the world."
>
> *Gareth and Lynette*, ll. 19–25.

This is very different. We get the idea, certainly. Gareth compares himself, as a knight of King Arthur, to a great eagle; but he speaks all in a breath of the eagle and himself. We have no clear-cut picture, but the rush of the soaring eagle and the flash of Gareth in his armor all in one moment. This is the difference between Simile and Metaphor : one is more distinct, the other is more brilliant.

If you will read *Sohrab and Rustum*, keeping your eye out for figures, you will find full twenty of these long, sustained figures. In *Gareth and Lynette* there are much fewer;[1] in *Horatius*, only three;[2] in *Sir Launfal*, none. Hence the style of *Sohrab and Rustum* has a certain distinctness to it. On the other hand, *Gareth and Lynette* is full of short similes—not full pictures, but just a word or two; and has also a good many metaphors. All this gives a sort of brilliancy. *Sohrab and Rustum* has but one sustained metaphor and few short similes, and the same may be said of *Horatius*.

In *Sohrab and Rustum*, then, we may say that the figures tend to give a more clear-cut impression, a more definite outline; in *Gareth and Lynette*, we have a more glowing and brilliant effect. The difference is something like that between a Greek statue of white marble and a modern picture, with all its fullness of color. The difference should be noted : it is not a difference in degree of excellence ; it is rather a difference between kinds of excellence. The manner of Arnold is sometimes called classic, and the manner of Tennyson is called romantic. Concerning these two

[1] For instance, ll. 1116–1119. [2] For instance, ll. 412–416.

words as applied to style, and especially to poetic style, the following has been written :

"In classical writing, every idea is called up to the mind as nakedly as possible, and, at the same time, as distinctly ; it is exhibited in white light, and left to produce its own effect by its own unaided power. In romantic writing, on the other hand, all objects are exhibited, as it were, through a colored and iridescent atmosphere. Round about every central idea the romantic writer summons up a cloud of accessory subordinate ideas for the sake of enhancing the effect at the risk of confusing its outlines. The temper, again, of the romantic writer is one of excitement, while the temper of the classical writer is one of self-possession. . . . On the one hand, there is calm, on the other, enthusiasm ; the virtues of one style are strength of grasp, with clearness and justness of presentment ; the virtues of the other style are glow of spirit, with magic and richness of suggestion."[1]

So far as metaphors and similes are concerned, Tennyson is romantic. But we must also note another kind of figure. In *Gareth and Lynette*, l. 141 :

> "Who walks thro' fire will hardly heed the smoke."

Bellicent means that Gareth, not minding the petty annoyances that must come with the great trial he undergoes, would be like one who, in walking through fire, would not heed the smoke.[2] But she does not directly say, "You will be like one who walks through fire," etc. She leaves us to guess the application. This we have called Allegory, for it is not simile and it is not metaphor ; and it is in character like the longer figures which are commonly called allegories. Thus, in the allegory of Gareth and the four brothers (ll. 618 ff., 1169), the comparisons are merely suggested, not stated. The temptations of youth are alluring and charming, but may be overcome by impetuous resistance ; the temptations of middle age are powerful and blinding—one must deal with them as one may ; the temptations of age are old habits that must be wrestled with long and bitterly, and after all these

[1] Sidney Colvin, in the Introduction to *Selections from Landor*.

[2] Actually, smoke kills far more quickly than does fire ; but then, in a way, the petty annoyances of this world may be more killing than its great sorrows.

struggles comes death, which is in reality not so awful as we have thought. All these things are suggested by the battles of Gareth with the four brothers, but the comparisons are not definitely stated. This we call Allegory. But just the same kind of figure are the shorter stories of ll. 42 ff., 100 ff., 982–987, and the symbolism of ll. 212 ff., 1174 ff.; and of just the same kind also (suggesting a comparison, but not stating it as in simile or metaphor) are the shorter figures of the lines, "Lion and stoat have isled together . . . in time of flood" (ll. 871, 2), or "red berries charm the bird" (l. 84). The allegory, then, in various forms is common in *Gareth and Lynette*. It is a figure, on the whole, romantic in character. Eastern literature, Arabic and Persian as well as Hebrew, abounds in it; the literature of the Middle Ages is full of it. Allegory may be found in the classics ; but, on the whole, as is easily seen, it does not help the calm, clear beauty of outline which the classic poets aimed to gain : it is indefinite, vague, mystical.

So far as these three figures are concerned, Simile, Metaphor, Allegory—it will be seen that *Sohrab and Rustum* is especially marked by its classic similes ; that *Gareth and Lynette* has brilliant romantic figures of various kinds : that *Sir Launfal* has immense wealth of fanciful metaphor ; that *Horatius* has few figures of any kind. Each poem has, then, a certain character of style given by its figures, which, had we time, we might see marked more strongly by its diction and expression, by its subject and mode of thought.

There is one word more to be said of figures of this kind—or, rather, of metaphors in particular. In studying diction [1] we have already seen that figurative words are very common in poetry ; *i.e.*, single words which suggest a figure that is not carried far. These figurative words are called "tropes," the meaning is of a word "turned away" from its literal, prosaic meaning into some figurative sense. We shall speak further concerning the tropes or figurative diction of the poets we are studying on p. 33; but now it will be enough to call attention to one point. Words suggestive of figures are very common in language ; we all use them every day, and that without thinking of them as figures. Thus we might say, "he *brooded* over his wrongs," without ever think-

[1] Introduction to Scott's *Lady of the Lake*.

ing of hens, or "his blood *boiled*," without thinking of it as being even over 100°. But these expressions when first used were really figurative, like very many other words which we use. To "prevent" meant really "to get ahead of"; to "inspire" meant really "to breathe into": but now nobody remembers that, and we use the words as though they were perfectly literal. These metaphorical words may be called "petrified metaphors"; for there is no more life in them, and they are, as it were, turned to stone. We need not trouble about them in studying figures, for no one thinks of their figurative meaning. A poet uses fresh, living figures; sometimes he revives old meanings, sometimes he suggests new ones.

B. Other Figures.

There are many other figures of speech mentioned by writers on poetry, as we have already said; but we shall not study them all particularly. We shall merely note the main characteristics of a few, which will suggest to us something interesting in the poets we are studying.

Personification.—The figure of personification is, as everyone knows, the speaking of some inanimate thing as if it were a person. Thus, where Macaulay says of the city of Cortona that she

> "lifts to heaven
> Her diadem of towers,"

he thinks of the city in the form of a beautiful woman. When Lowell says of the brook (l. 181) that *he* heard the wind and built a roof, he thinks of the brook as a man looking after himself in bad weather. When Tennyson writes, "a slender-shafted Pine, lost footing, fell, and so was whirled away" (l. 4), he thinks of the tree as a person who actually falls into the torrent. When Arnold speaks of the river Oxus "rejoicing . . . under the solitary moon," he thinks of it as having life and personality.

Personification is, and always has been, common in poetry. The poet conceives of the world as full of movement and life; and just as the ancient Greeks really believed in spirits of the trees and water-springs, of the mountains and the sea,—spirits of human shape and beauty,—so the poets are apt to think of things which have not life as if they had.

One form of personification, and the simplest, is that of speaking of some abstraction as though it were a person. Thus, Goldsmith writes:

> "And shouting Folly hails them from the shore";

and we can all remember the analogies in the other arts—statues of Justice, pictures of Charity. You must remember that this is not the only kind of Personification. It is not necessary that we use a capital letter; nor, on the other hand, is it enough to do so.

Personification is sometimes thought of as a figure of resemblance. The poet, it is said, thinks of the city as being *like* a beautiful woman, of the brook as being *like* a wise and busy builder. But this, I hardly think, is so; for the moment the poet thinks of the city *as* a woman. If you cannot understand that, you must read more poetry until you can.

Metonymy and Synecdoche.—There are a number of figures which go in general under the name of Metonymy and Synecdoche, which all arise from our way of alluding to things by the most striking circumstance or part. Metonymy is the naming something by some accompaniment which comes naturally to mind. It is of very many kinds. Sometimes "a significant adjunct" gives a name, as when we say "blue-coat" or "blue-jacket" for soldier or sailor. Sometimes the name of the container is used for the thing contained, as when we say "a long purse," meaning the money that is in it. Sometimes we speak of the effect, meaning the cause, as when we say "gray hairs" for the old age which causes them. Quite as common is Synecdoche, or the using the name of a part for a whole, as when we say "wheel" for "bicycle," or "trolley" for "electric railroad." There are other kinds of metonymy and synecdoche, but these are the more common forms. They come from a desire to indicate anything by whatever attracts most notice. These figures are not uncommon in daily speech: the examples of *wheel* and *trolley* show how they arise. They are a part of the poetry of everyday conversation.

On the other hand, they are not so very common in real poetry. Of course, the poet uses the expressions of common talk if he chooses; but he is not nearly so apt to invent new metonymies and synecdoches as he is to invent new similes. Such, at least, is the

case with the poems we have in hand. All the reasons for this I cannot at present suggest. One, however, is that Tennyson, Macaulay, Arnold, at least, in these narrative poems, with all their figurative similes and metaphors, do study a concreteness and directness of diction; and to this the use of metonymy is opposed. It may be more natural to say "a sail" when you mean a certain vessel seen at sea, but it calls up a more distinct picture to say "a schooner." It may be more brilliant to say, "he seized his blade," but it gives a more distinct picture to say "he seized his broadsword." If you will look at what is said on pp. 29–34 on the diction of these poems, you will see that it is generally specific and concrete; hence, there are not many metonymies and synecdoches.

Interrogation and Exclamation.—When Lowell writes,

> "What is so rare as a day in June?"

we know that he expects no answer to the question. It is a question in form only. When he writes,

> "And hark! how clear bold chanticleer,
> Warmed with the new wine of the year,
> Tells all in his lusty crowing,"

we are conscious that he has departed from the plain manner of prose, which generally uses statements rather than exclamations. In narrative poems, such as these we are studying, these devices, which are often called figures of speech, are not very common. But one or two things are worth noting. One is that in *Horatius* you will find a few, for *Horatius* is written as though it were an old ballad (p. 12), an old song sung to listeners. Hence, Macaulay writes:

> "But hark! the cry is Astur:
> And lo! the ranks divide," 348, 349.

But in general you will not find many such expressions; for they rather interfere with the clearness and directness which we have spoken of elsewhere.

In Lowell also you will find a few such, but for a somewhat different reason. They occur in the prelude to Part One, where the tone of the poet—see especially ll. 9–32—is much as if he were talking to somebody. The passage is not narrative, but rather

lyrical. In narrative poems such figures are rare ; in *Sohrab and Rustum* you will not find one of them, except in the language of one or another of the characters. It is not, then, necessary to poetry that we should have these unusual expressions ; we may have the plainest kind of sentence, and especially in narrative poetry.

There are many other modes of speech which are called Figures, but we have noted the commonest. In your study of them always bear in mind one thing : a figure of speech in a poem is an indication of the way a poet thinks. Do not look at it as just something in a book to be learned about ; think of it as something that will give you, in some slight degree, to understand the workings of a poet's mind. That is not, it is true, one of the reasons for reading poetry ; we read poetry to gain pleasure from it. But it is one of the reasons for studying poetry ; for an appreciation of how a poet thinks will enable us to read his work more readily and sympathetically, and therefore with more pleasure.

METRE.

A few notes are added here, on Rhythm and Rhmye, for those who have already made a beginning in the subject. References are made to the study of the subject in the Introduction to Tennyson's *Enoch Arden and Other Poems* (No. 6 in this Series). Those who have studied other systems of metre, however, will apprehend the following remarks by remembering the notation. Unaccented syllables are indicated by x, accented by a ; thus, an iambic foot is xa, a trochaic foot ax, etc. The figure before the foot indicates the measure ; thus, $5xa$ is iambic pentameter, $4ax$ trochaic tetrameter, etc.

Gareth and Lynette.—The poem is in blank verse, $5xa$ unrhymed. Examples of the customary variations are as follows :

A. Substitution of ax for xa.

1. Especially in the first foot ; note the emphatic effect in ll. 23, 62, 104, 128, 149, 503 (note the effect of the pause) ; 118, 191, 887 (note the pause at the end of the second foot, a common cadence with Tennyson) ; 796 (cf. *C*. xxa in third foot) ; 939 (note the effect of the repetition ; the three lines beginning with an accent,

the fourth line running in normal form, and the fifth again beginning with an accent).

2. Rarely in the second foot, l. 181 ; occasionally in the third, ll. 16, 169, 219, 235, 527, 559 ; less often in the fourth, ll. 89, 142, 173, 1004.

B. Substitution of *xxaa* for *xaxa* ; not so common as in *Sohrab and Rustum :* ll. 85, 182, 198, 225, 418.

C. Substitution of *xxa* for *xa* (*anapæstic movement*). This occurs quite frequently ; note the following lines how the lightness of the metre harmonizes with the thought :

> "Linger with vacillating obedience," 13.
> "In ever-highering eagle-circles up," 21.
> "Wept from her sides as water flowing away," 213.
> "Melody on branch, and melody in mid-air," 180.
> "Would hurry thither, and when he saw the knights," 511.
> "Tumbled it ; oilily bubbled up the mere," 796.
> "He drave his enemy backward down the bridge," 945.

D. Feminine lines ; *xax* for *xa* in the last line. *E.g.*, ll. 8, 356, 566, 1155, 1169, 1246, 1366.

The three songs should also be noted : ll. 974–976 ; 1034–1036, 1040–1043, 1049–1051 ; 1130–1132. They are of the same rhythm as the rest of the poem, and consist of stanzas, each made of a couplet and a third line of the nature of a refrain.

Sohrab and Rustum.—The metre of *Sohrab and Rustum* is also blank verse. We do not give an analysis of its peculiarities, for it will be more useful for the pupil to go over the different usages and compare with *Gareth and Lynette.* Thus it will be found that the *ax* foot occurs often at the beginning of the line, but that there are no such repetitions for effect as in *Gareth and Lynette*, ll. 939–943. There are not so many substitutions of the *xxa* foot, so that the poem has a somewhat graver, less animated motion, as suits the subject. There are many more lines with *xxaa* for *xaxa*, as:

> "And the first′ gray′ of morning filled the east," l. 1.
> "Was dulled ; for he slept′ light′, an old man's sleep," l. 29.

This concentration of accents takes away from the lightness

of movement; indeed it is rather more like the usual rhythm of prose. These points should be looked up and exemplified in the poem.

Horatius.—The metre of *Horatius* is an old English ballad-metre made more regular. That metre consisted of stanzas of four lines, the first and third being 3*xa* lines with feminine ending, the second and fourth being 3*xa*; *ax* and *xxa* feet being often substituted for the *xa* foot. This is a good swinging ballad-metre, but you can see that it would be rather tiresome in so long a poem as this ; there would be a hundred and fifty stanzas to it. So Macaulay makes some changes, as follows :

1. He makes the regular stanzas of eight lines instead of four. In the other *Lays*, especially *The Battle of Lake Regillus* and *The Prophecy of Capys*, he makes the stanzas of very variable length.

2. He often makes the stanzas even longer by introducing a line that will rhyme with one of the lines otherwise unrhymed (either the third or seventh), as in the first stanza.

3. He often introduces more than one line in such cases, as in stanza xxi, giving a peculiar effect.[1] The repetition of the rhyme gives us a prolonged sustained feeling. Thus in stanza xxi :

> "And nearer fast and nearer
> Doth the red whirlwind come ;
> And louder still and still more loud—"

Now we expect a line rhyming with *come:* but we do not get it, nor at the next line. Our expectation is prolonged in a way that serves to harmonize with the rolling warcloud and the long array of spears. The effect may be observed in many stanzas, especially in xlix, where the fourfold rhyme gives especial emphasis to the picture of the fierce old bear, the type of Rome at bay.

4. He lengthens the third or seventh line of the stanza ; sometimes with a rhyme, making what is really two short lines:

> "Like an eagle's nest, hangs on the crest."

5. We have also the ordinary variations of iambic verse, as noted above.

[1] Cf. *Sir Launfal*, l. 167.

A. *ax* for *xa*:

> "Piled' by the hands of gi'ants
> For godlike kings of old." 28, 29.

B. *xxaa* for *xaxa*, generally at the beginning of the line:

> "From the proud' mart' of Pisæ,
> Queen of the western waves."

C. *xxa* for *xa* in ll. 12, 20, 24, 92, etc.

D. Lines 1, 3, 5, 7 in each stanza are regularly feminine.

These variations break up the regularity which might prove monotonous and are themselves pleasant in effect.

The Vision of Sir Launfal.—The metre of the poem is not wholly regular. It begins with a series of 5*xa* lines, but with no anapæstic (*xxa*) variation till the eighth line, in *wavering*. It continues with 4*xa* verses, lighter in character because shorter. In the following lines (21–32) both rhyme and rhythm are smarter, more jingly, we might almost say; the change of form (the frequent anapæsts and double rhymes) comes to suit the transition to the semi-satirical tone. But the same light dancing rhythm and the same double rhymes suit the glowing lines on summer. Read ll. 33–79 and see how the rhythm seems to move along. In the lines that follow, the movement is a little more regular, for the thought is graver and more serious. So the poem goes on with a certain irregularity of rhythm; sometimes we have a slow-moving 4*xa* lacking the first syllable (ll. 127, 154), sometimes we have the long and rapid lines (174, 178), or the shorter, but quite as swift lines (46, 113); the rhyme varies too, sometimes coming in couplets, sometimes alternately; sometimes simple single rhymes, sometimes dancing double rhymes (37, 38; 44, 46). The rhythm and rhyme are constantly varied as the mood of the poet changes.

For it is hardly to be thought that Lowell planned out beforehand the modulations and movements of his verse and his thought; that does not seem to have been his way of working. This poem, at least, he is said to have written in two days: and it was rarely his habit to revise his work carefully. It would seem, therefore, as though the truth were something like this:

When the poet was in the full flush of his exuberant thought of springtime, the words came hurrying, and no lines would suit him which had not life and movement to them; but in graver moments, when his mind paused a moment, as it always does in thought, his hand paused too, and instinctively his verse took a slower movement, which, as he read the lines he had written, he saw was good.

DICTION.

The student of the note on poetic diction in the Introduction to Scott's *Lady of the Lake* (No. 9 of this Series) will notice some differences between the points noted there and the chief points in these poems. Yet the principles are practically the same.

Gareth and Lynette.—There are a good many archaic expressions, for the story is of olden time. *Thou*, *thee*, *ye*, and verbal forms in *-st* and *-th* may be found in abundance; so, also, *be* as indicative present (ll. 237, 238, 261, 613), and preterites in *a*, as *brake*, l. 57; *drave*, l. 201; *spake*, l. 295. The following words also occur frequently: *an*, ll. 37, 40, 50, 98, 142, 252, etc.; *so*, ll. 131, 263, 268, 339, 507, 588, etc.; *save*, ll. 107, 136; *albeit*, ll. 82, 121; *whereof*, l. 66; *saving*, 261; *anon*, l. 193; *lo*, l. 73. So also *glamour* (magic), l. 202; *boon*, l. 327; *mien*, l. 443; *casque*, l. 665; *reave*, l. 411; *deem*, l. 120; *slay*, 371; *crave*, 861; and such uses as *were* (= would be), ll. 17, 51; *had* (= would have), ll. 366, 821; *should* (= were to), l. 226. Besides the fact that the poem is of olden time there are other reasons for the archaic diction. One is that Tennyson naturally has Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* in mind, which is full of ancient expressions: *brewis*, *avail* (advantage), *lightly* (quickly), *worship* (honor). Another influence would seem to be that of Spenser, *ruth*, *wreak*, *bought*, *trenchant*, *clomb*.[1] There is none of the conventional diction (*sylvan bowers*, etc.), such as we sometimes find in poetry. On the other hand, there is extreme simplicity in the diction, coming perhaps from the large proportion of words of old English origin in it.

There are some abbreviations, but less than in *The Lady of the Lake*.

[1] G. C. Macaulay's edition of *Gareth and Lynette*.

There is a strong tendency toward specific words, not so much toward figurative words. Thus :

> . . . "Gareth, in a showerful spring
> Stared at the spate."

Here the poet has compounded the word *showerful* to describe spring ; the word gives a very definite idea ; *rainy* would mean something else. He says *stared* instead of *looked*, a more general word, and uses the Scottish word *spate* instead of *flood.* Figurative words are not so common as archaic words. The student should note such examples as

> "to grace
> Thy *climbing* life, and cherish my *prone* year," 93, 94.

Some peculiarities should be mentioned which did not occur in the note on diction alluded to.

Coined compounds, often alliterative : *gloomy-gladed*, l. 777; *full-fair*, l. 825; *bone-battered*, 1024; *May-music*, l. 1054; *deep-dimpled*, l. 1063; *fast-falling*, l. 90; *storm-strengthened*, l. 677; *foul-fleshed*, l. 729; *princely-proud*, l. 158 ; *tourney-skill*, l. 1016; *shield-lions*, l. 1186; *lance-splintering*, l. 1273; *slender-shafted*, l. 3; *silver-misty*, l. 186; *wan-sallow*, l. 444.

So also does he use such obvious derivatives as *discaged*, l. 20 ; *fluent*, l. 454; *decrescent*, *increscent*, l. 519 ; *ever-highering*, l. 21 ; *co-twisted*, l. 222 ; *youthhood*, l. 566 ; *waveringly*, l. 914.

Expressions like these come from the poetic desire for compressed speech ; it is more striking to express one's thought in a few words than in a longer roundabout expression. Some writers have thought that this feeling for condensed expression was the explanation for the poetic use of abbreviation.

Sohrab and Rustum.—The diction of *Sohrab and Rustum* will be found to have less archaism than that of *Gareth and Lynette.* The pronouns *thou*, *thine*, *ye ;* the forms in *-st* and *-th ;* preterites in *a*, as *spake*, l. 149 ; *sate*, l. 199; in *o*, as *shore*, l. 497 ; *clove*, l. 496 ; certain usages like the avoidance of the auxiliary, as in *knew not*, l. 283; inversion, as in *soon be that day*, l. 836—these are merely the signs of a diction which, like that of the

Bible, is distinguished and elevated above common speech, but not especially characteristic of ancient time. There is an absolute lack of old-fashioned "poetic diction,"[1] nor are abbreviations common ; *o'er* and *'tis* occur several times, but there are few others. To one who has been reading *The Lady of the Lake* or *The Idylls of the King*, the diction of this poem will seem very plain and colorless. It is, indeed, far more nearly than either of those poems, the language of prose. Matthew Arnold greatly admired the poet Wordsworth, and one of Wordsworth's poetic principles was that the words of poetry should be the same as the words of prose. In this poem Matthew Arnold is strongly classical in his workmanship, as Tennyson and Lowell are romantic. The difference between classic work and romantic work has already been explained : here it will be enough to say that although Arnold uses the simple, unadorned, direct language of prose, yet his diction is not what we call prosaic ; his language is as far from the careless familiarity of our every-day conversation as a classic statue is from the careless attitudes of our intimate every-day life. His desire is to give a clear and definite conception of a noble subject, a conception that shall have the distinct and sharply-cut outline of a great mountain against the blue sky. It is necessary that his language should be not quite that of common speech ; hence he uses expressions which have a gravity and dignity to us because we associate them with sacred and reverent utterance. But he does not otherwise use minor devices of language, for they might distract his readers from the main object.[2]

As it is his purpose to be clear cut and sure, he is definite and specific in his wording as in his pictures. Peran-Wisa, rising from the warm rugs, puts on a woollen coat and a black sheepskin cap, and over all a white cloak, ties his sandals to his feet and takes a staff in his hand. We have here a distinct imagination. With this compare the description of Gareth, who dropped his long cloak and stood forth as brilliant as a dragon-fly issuing from a cocoon (ll. 667–674). This is a more brilliant piece of imagination, but not so distinct. Note the description of the three brother knights in *Gareth and Lynette* : the Morning-Star reflected in

[1] Introduction to *The Lady of the Lake*, p. x.

[2] Thus he has but few figures, and we have already seen (p. 19) what is their effect.

the clear stream, ll. 911–916 ; the Noonday Sun almost blinding the beholders, ll. 1000–1002 ; the Star of Evening, whose garb of hardened skins we hear of in the words of Lynette, ll. 1065–1069 ; the black knight, Death, "crowned with fleshless laughter," l. 1348. These are imaginative descriptions, but the figures lack the clear and classic outline of Rustum at the table, ll. 196–200 ; of Ruksh, ll. 272–279 ; of the tomb of Sohrab, ll. 788–791. To this desire for clear definiteness belongs Arnold's use of specific words, as *silt*, l. 769; *caked*, l. 736; *smirched*, l. 701; *huddling*, l. 563; and so on.

Horatius.—The diction of *Horatius* is marked chiefly by its exact and specific character. The student will easily observe the extent to which the diction is archaic ; *thou*, *ye*, *spake*, *bare ;* some few poetic forms, as *morn*, l. 69 ; *mart*, l. 34 ; *yore*, l. 73 ; *I wis*, l. 138 (incorrect for *ywiss*); *I ween*, l. 518; *hied*, l. 145; *lo*, l. 243 ; *smote*, l. 279 ; in all we have a slightly archaic coloring. It will also be observed that the diction is not figurative[1] ; the poet states directly what he has to say much as one would say it in prose. But the diction is specific ; and that is because for everything that he said Macaulay had an idea in mind that was very definite indeed, and for every idea that he wished to express he had the right words. So in the lines

"Shall *plunge* the struggling sheep," 61.
"This year, the *must* shall foam," 63.

The specific word in the first case fills out the picture ; in the second case it is the one right word to express an idea which would otherwise demand a roundabout expression. Often the specific words add more than one would think at first. Thus, in the lines following, the specific words convey a considerable meaning to one who understands them. See the notes in each case : l. 37, *fair-haired ;* l. 115, *skins ;* l. 144, *girded ;* l. 196, *ivory ;* l. 277, *Commons ;* l. 360, *litter ;* l. 470, *tawny*.

Macaulay's greatest power in poetry, as in prose, was the double power of realization. He realized his own ideas in mind : that is, he made his imaginations take form as if they had been actual

[1] Nor are there many figures ; see p. 17, note.

experiences, he made things which had been only to others be as though they had been to him ; that in the first place ; and in the second, he expressed his realized ideas, so that they come as nearly as may be to be real to the reader. Such is Macaulay's chief power as a poet—that he makes that which is not seem as if it were real.

The Vision of Sir Launfal.—So far as archaic words are concerned, *Sir Launfal* is not absolutely uniform; it will be good exercise to find out how and why. In regard to the following words, mention whether or not it is an archaism, whether the archaism occurs throughout the poem, and, if not, see if the idea explains the use of the form.

1. What reason may be given for the use of

(a) *Thou*, ll. 282, 283 ; *Thee*, ll. 280, 287, 320 ; *Thy*, l. 284 ?

(b) *Didst*, l. 319 ?

(c) *Lo*, l. 315 ; *Behold*, l. 318 ?

2. Is there any reason for *doth*, l. 10; *hath*, l. 23; instead of *does* and *has* ? The other verbs in the poem do not have the ending in *-th*.

3. Is there anything to be said of *list*, l. 3 ; *lay*, l. 4 ?

4. Of *an* alms, l. 273 ; *me*, l. 162 ?

5. Are there any abbreviations in the poem ? Are they conversational or not ? Cf. ll. 29, 47.

The diction is rather figurative than specific, as Macaulay in *Horatius* is specific rather than figurative.[1] The two qualities are not contrary to each other, but you can see easily enough that a man who is chiefly bent on getting an exact view of anything will not be likely to think of comparing it to something else; and, on the other hand, a man who, when he mentions anything, always thinks also of something else, will not be so likely to be definite as to the thing itself. Most poets, however, have something of both gifts, the imaginative vision that calls up the vivid picture, and also the imaginative comparison that brings to mind some resemblance. In Lowell this latter power was the more developed. Not only is this poem full of more extended figures, but there are many *tropes*, or figures, implied in single

[1] We have already compared the frequency of more extended figures.

words. Take the well-known passage, ll. 33–79, and see how many comparisons are suggested by single words. This "figured speech," as we may call it, in Lowell, came, or, rather, was encouraged, by his wide reading of Shakespeare and the Old English Dramatists.

Besides some little knowledge of figures, of metre, and of diction, you may gain from what has gone before one other thing, a lesson in method. The preceding sections may at first sight seem complicated and unnecessarily detailed. That is chiefly because the facts of the poetry are usually cited to exemplify the statements made. This is the best way of *realizing* one's knowledge. It is of no great value merely to know, for instance, that Tennyson's diction in the *Idylls* is somewhat archaic: the thing important is to know that such a statement includes such facts as are cited on p. 29. It is of little value to know that the metre of *Horatius* is based on the old ballad-metre: you want to know how it is like it and how unlike, as explained on p. 27. Nor should you feel that you are merely gaining information from somebody else. This is the sort of thing you can do for yourselves: there are plenty of examples besides those cited. You can search and remember and compare. Keep your eye on the texts of the poems: so will you learn to know them. And that is the first thing in studying poetry: to know. There are other things to do with poetry besides studying it; but if you study, your object is to know.

POEMS OF KNIGHTLY ADVENTURE.

GARETH AND LYNETTE.

THE last tall son of Lot and Bellicent,
And tallest, Gareth, in a showerful spring
Stared at the spate.[1] A slender-shafted Pine
Lost footing, fell, and so was whirl'd away.
5 "How he went down," said Gareth, "as a false knight
Or evil king before my lance if lance
Were mine to use—O senseless cataract,
Bearing all down in thy precipitancy—
And yet thou art but swollen with cold snows
10 And mine is living[2] blood: thou dost His will,
The Maker's, and not knowest, and I that know,
Have strength and wit, in my good mother's hall
Linger with vacillating obedience,
Prison'd, and kept and coax'd and whistled to—
15 Since the good mother holds me still a child!
Good mother is bad mother unto me!
A worse were better; yet no worse would I.
Heaven yield her for it, but in me put force
To weary her ears with one continuous prayer,
20 Until she let me fly discaged to sweep
In ever-highering eagle-circles up
To the great Sun of Glory, and thence swoop

[1] Scotch for *spring torrent, freshet.*
[2] and therefore should run with more life than mere water.

Down upon all things base, and dash them dead,
A knight of Arthur,[1] working out his will,
25 To cleanse the world. Why, Gawain,[2] when he came
With Modred hither in the summer time,
Ask'd me to tilt with him, the proven knight.
Modred for want of worthier was the judge.
Then I so shook him in the saddle, he said,
30 'Thou hast half prevail'd against me,' said so—he—
Tho' Modred biting his thin lips was mute,
For he is alway sullen: what care I?"

And Gareth went, and hovering round her chair,
Ask'd, "Mother, tho' ye count me still the child,
35 Sweet mother, do ye love the child?" She laugh'd,
"Thou art but a wild goose to question it."
"Then, mother, an[3] ye love the child," he said,
"Being a goose and rather tame than wild,
Hear the child's story." "Yea, my well-beloved,
40 An 'twere but of the goose and golden eggs."

And Gareth answer'd her with kindling eyes,
"Nay, nay, good mother, but this egg of mine
Was finer gold than any goose can lay;
For this an Eagle, a royal Eagle, laid
45 Almost beyond eye-reach, on such a palm
As glitters gilded in thy Book of Hours.[4]
And there was ever haunting round the palm
A lusty youth, but poor, who often saw
The splendor sparkling from aloft, and thought
50 'An I could climb and lay my hand upon it,
Then were I wealthier than a leash[5] of kings.'

[1] See p. 10.

[2] Gawain and Modred were brothers of Gareth and nephews of King Arthur. The first appears in the old romances as the type of knightly courtesy, the other as the type of the treacherous, villainous knight.

[3] if.

[4] a book with devotions for different times of the day.

[5] A leash is a thong to hold dogs. Gareth uses the word here to show his contempt for kings merely as men of wealth. True kings who live to rule righteously he reveres and admires.

But ever when he reach'd a hand to climb,
One, that had loved him from his childhood, caught
And stay'd him, 'Climb not lest thou break thy neck,
55 I charge thee by my love,' and so the boy,
Sweet mother, neither clomb,[1] nor brake his neck,
But brake his very heart in pining for it,
And past away."

To whom the mother said,
"True love, sweet son, had risk'd himself and climb'd,
60 And handed down the golden treasure to him."

And Gareth answer'd her with kindling eyes,
"Gold? said I gold?—ay then, why he, or she,
Or whosoe'er it was, or half the world
Had ventured—*had* the thing I spake of been
65 Mere gold—but this was all of that true steel,
Whereof they forged the brand[2] Excalibur,[3]
And lightnings play'd about it in the storm,
And all the little fowl were flurried at it,
And there were cries and clashings in the nest,
70 That sent him from his senses: let me go."[4]

Then Bellicent bemoan'd herself and said,
"Hast thou no pity upon my loneliness?
Lo, where thy father Lot beside the hearth
Lies like a log, and all but smoulder'd out!
75 For ever since when traitor to the King[5]
He fought against him in the Barons' war,
And Arthur gave him back his territory,
His age hath slowly droopt, and now lies there

[1] archaic past tense of *climb*.
[2] sword.
[3] the famous sword of Arthur, given him by the Lady of the Lake (*Coming of Arthur*, p. 45, in *Enoch Arden and other Poems*, No. 6 in this series).
[4] Notice the effect of the three simple words coming at the end of the impassioned exclamation.
[5] There had been those who did not allow Arthur's title and therefore banded together against him. See l. 120.

51900

A yet-warm corpse, and yet unburiable,
80 No more; nor sees, nor hears, nor speaks, nor knows.
And both thy brethren are in Arthur's hall,
Albeit[1] neither loved with that full love
I feel for thee, nor worthy such a love:
Stay therefore thou; red berries charm the bird,
85 And thee, mine innocent, the jousts,[2] the wars,
Who never knewest finger-ache, nor pang
Of wrench'd or broken limb—an often chance
In those brain-stunning shocks, and tourney-falls,
Frights to my heart; but stay: follow the deer
90 By these tall firs and our fast-falling burns;[3]
So make thy manhood mightier day by day;
Sweet is the chase: and I will seek thee out
Some comfortable[4] bride and fair, to grace
Thy climbing life, and cherish my prone year,
95 Till falling into Lot's forgetfulness
I know not thee, myself, nor anything.
Stay, my best son! ye are yet more boy than man."

Then Gareth, "An ye hold me yet for child,
Hear yet once more the story of the child.
100 For, mother, there was once a King, like ours;[5]
The prince his heir, when tall and marriageable,
Ask'd for a bride; and thereupon the King
Set two before him. One was fair, strong, arm'd—
But to be won by force—and many men
105 Desired her; one, good lack,[6] no man desired.
And these were the conditions of the King:
That save[7] he won the first by force, he needs
Must wed that other, whom no man desired,
A red-faced bride who knew herself so vile,

[1] although.
[2] friendly tournaments.
[3] Scotch for *brooks*.
[4] cheerful and agreeable.
[5] Gareth thinks of Arthur offering him such a choice.
[6] an old colloquial exclamation.
[7] except, unless.

110 That evermore she long'd to hide herself,
Nor fronted man or woman eye to eye—
Yea—some she cleaved to, but they died of her.
And one—they call'd her Fame; and one, O Mother,
How can ye keep me tether'd to you—Shame!
115 Man am I grown, a man's work must I do.
Follow the deer? follow the Christ, the King,[1]
Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow the King—
Else, wherefore born?"

To whom the mother said,
"Sweet son, for there be many who deem him not,
120 Or will not deem him, wholly proven King—
Albeit in mine own heart I knew him King,[2]
When I was frequent with him in my youth,
And heard him Kingly speak, and doubted him
No more than he, himself; but felt him mine,
125 Of closest kin to me; yet—wilt thou leave
Thine easeful bidding here, and risk thine all,
Life, limbs, for one that is not proven King?
Stay, till the cloud that settles round his birth
Hath lifted but a little. Stay, sweet son."

130 And Gareth answer'd quickly, "Not an hour,
So[3] that ye yield me—I will walk thro' fire,
Mother, to gain it—your full leave to go.
Not proven, who swept the dust of ruin'd Rome
From off the threshold of the realm, and crush'd
135 The Idòlaters, and made the people free?
Who should be King save him who makes us free?"[4]

[1] Arthur was preëminently a Christian king. Hence his knighthood sang "The King shall follow Christ, and we the King."

[2] Bellicent knew him for her brother, the son of Uther, the former king.

[3] if.

[4] Arthur had led the British against the Romans and against the heathen Saxons. See *Coming of Arthur*, pp. 52, 53, of *Enoch Arden and other Poems*, No. 6 in this series.

So when the Queen, who long had sought in vain
To break him from the intent to which he grew,
Found her son's will unwaveringly one,
140 She answer'd craftily, "Will ye walk thro' fire?[1]
Who walks thro' fire will hardly heed the smoke.
Ay, go then, an ye must: only one proof,
Before thou ask the King to make thee knight,
Of thine obedience and thy love to me,
145 Thy mother,—I demand."

And Gareth cried,
"A hard one, or a hundred, so I go.
Nay—quick! the proof to prove me to the quick!"[2]

But slowly spake the mother, looking at him,
"Prince,[3] thou shalt go disguised to Arthur's hall,
150 And hire thyself to serve for meats and drinks
Among the scullions and the kitchen-knaves,
And those that hand the dish across the bar.
Nor shalt thou tell thy name to any one.
And thou shalt serve a twelvemonth and a day."[4]

155 For so the Queen believed that when her son
Beheld his only way to glory lead
Low down thro' villain[5] kitchen-vassalage,[6]
Her own true Gareth was too princely-proud
To pass thereby: so should he rest with her,
160 Closed in her castle from the sound of arms.

Silent awhile was Gareth, then replied,
"The thrall in person may be free in soul,

[1] Bellicent quickly takes up his offer.

[2] *Quick* originally meant *living*, as in the expression "the quick and the dead." We speak now of "the quick of the finger-nails." "To the quick" means "to the most sensitive part."

[3] being grandson of old King Uther.

[4] "A twelvemonth and a day" is a favorite expression in the old romances. It comes originally from the law.

[5] *Villain* formerly meant no more than *low*, *vulgar*.

[6] service in the kitchen.

And I shall see the jousts. Thy son am I,
And since thou art my mother, must obey.
165 I therefore yield me freely to thy will;
For hence will I,[1] disguised, and hire myself
To serve with scullions and with kitchen-knaves;
Nor tell my name to any—no, not the King."

Gareth awhile linger'd. The mother's eye
170 Full of the wistful fear that he would go,
And turning toward him wheresoe'er he turn'd,
Perplext his outward purpose, till an hour,
When waken'd by the wind which with full voice
Swept bellowing thro' the darkness on to dawn,
175 He rose, and out of slumber calling two
That still[2] had tended on him from his birth,
Before the wakeful mother heard him, went.

The three were clad like tillers of the soil.
Southward they set their faces. The birds made
180 Melody on branch, and melody in mid-air.[3]
The damp hill-slopes were quicken'd[4] into green,
And the live green had kindled into flowers,
For it was past the time of Easterday.

So, when their feet were planted on the plain
185 That broaden'd toward the base of Camelot,[5]
Far off they saw the silver-misty morn
Rolling her smoke about the Royal mount,
That rose between the forest and the field.
At times the summit of the high city flash'd;
190 At times the spires and turrets half-way down
Prick'd thro' the mist; at times the great gate shone

[1] Hence will I go.

[2] continually.

[3] Notice the rhythm of the line and the alliteration; it harmonizes with the subject.

[4] brought to life. See l. 147.

[5] Camelot was one of the chief cities of Arthur, and a favorite place for holding his court.

Only, that open'd on the field below:
Anon,[1] the whole fair city had disappeared.

Then those who went with Gareth were amazed.
195 One crying, "Let us go no farther, lord.
Here is a city of Enchanters, built
By fairy Kings." The second echo'd him,
"Lord, we have heard from our wise men at home
To Northward, that this King is not the King.
200 But only changeling[2] out of Fairyland,
Who drave the heathen hence by sorcery
And Merlin's glamour."[3] Then the first again,
"Lord, there is no such city anywhere.
But all a vision."

Gareth answer'd them
205 With laughter, swearing he had glamour enow[4]
In his own blood, his princedom, youth and hopes,
To plunge old Merlin in the Arabian sea;
So push'd them all unwilling towards the gate,
And there was no gate like it under heaven;
210 For barefoot on the keystone, which was lined
And rippled like an ever-fleeting wave,
The Lady of the Lake[5] stood: all her dress
Wept from her sides as water flowing away;
But like the cross her great and goodly arms
215 Stretch'd under all the cornice and upheld:
And drops of water fell from either hand;
And down from one a sword was hung, from one

[1] soon, in a little while.

[2] The old superstition was that the fairies sometimes stole away children, leaving in their place "changelings," as they were called, beings of a strange, unearthly nature.

[3] the old word for *magic*.

[4] enough.

[5] The sculpture on the gate is symbolic, as is much else in the *Idylls*. The Lady of the Lake stands for the Christian Church: her dress, like water, is the sacrament of baptism; the sword and the censer typify the militant and reverent characteristics; the fish was a sacred emblem among the early Christians, for the word for *fish* in Greek is made up of the initials of the Greek words for "Jesus Christ, Son of God, the Saviour."

A censer, either worn with wind and storm;
And o'er her breast floated the sacred fish;
220 And in the space to left of her, and right,
Were Arthur's wars in weird devices done,
New things and old co-twisted,[1] as if Time
Were nothing, so inveterately,[2] that men
Were giddy gazing there; and over all
225 High on the top were those three Queens,[3] the friends
Of Arthur, who should help him at his need.

Then those with Gareth for so long a space
Stared at the figures, that at last it seem'd
The dragon-boughts[4] and elvish emblemings
230 Began to move, seethe, twine and curl: they[5] call'd
To Gareth, "Lord, the gateway is alive."

And Gareth likewise on them fixt his eyes
So long, that ev'n to him they seem'd to move.
Out of the city a blast of music peal'd.
235 Back from the gate started the three, to whom
From out thereunder came an ancient man,
Long-bearded, saying, "Who be ye, my sons?"

Then Gareth, "We be[6] tillers of the soil,
Who leaving share[7] in furrow come to see
240 The glories of our King: but these, my men
(Your city moved so weirdly in the mist),
Doubt if the King be King at all, or come
From Fairyland; and whether this be built
By magic, and by fairy Kings and Queens;
245 Or whether there be any city at all,

[1] twisted together.
[2] inextricably.
[3] often mentioned in the *Idylls of the King*, especially in the *Coming* and the *Passing of Arthur*.
[4] the folds (boughts) of the dragon's tail.
[5] his two companions.
[6] See p. 29.
[7] ploughshare.

Or all a vision; and this music now
Hath scared them both, but tell thou these the truth."

Then that old Seer made answer playing on him[1]
And saying, "Son, I have seen the good ship sail
250 Keel upward and mast downward in the heavens,
And solid turrets topsy-turvy in air;
And here is truth; but an it please thee not,
Take thou the truth as[2] thou hast told it me.
For truly, as thou sayest, a Fairy King
255 And Fairy Queens have built the city, son;
They came from out a sacred mountain-cleft
Toward the sunrise, each with harp in hand,
And built it to the music of their harps.[3]
And as thou sayest, it is enchanted, son,
260 For there is nothing in it as it seems
Saving the King;[4] tho' some there be that hold
The King a shadow, and the city real:[5]
Yet take thou heed of him, for, so[6] thou pass
Beneath this archway, then wilt thou become
265 A thrall to his enchantments, for the King
Will bind thee by such vows, as is a shame
A man should not be bound by, yet the which
No man can keep;[7] but, so thou dread to swear,
Pass not beneath this gateway, but abide
270 Without, among the cattle of the field.
For, an ye heard a music, like enow
They are building still, seeing the city is built

[1] trying him, and making game of him.

[2] in the same manner; that is, untruly. So in l. 283 Merlin mocks Gareth as Gareth had mocked him.

[3] In Greek legend the walls of Thebes arose to the music of Amphion.

[4] The king alone was what he appeared to be. The others all concealed, under their noble exterior, some touch of evil, though never so slight.

[5] Some thought the king's ways were foolishness and the way of the world about him the true way.

[6] if; as in l. 131 and elsewhere.

[7] He means that the ideals of the king are so noble that nobody could refuse them, yet so hard to attain them that everybody must make some failure. Yet Gareth, like all finer souls (not "cattle of the field," l. 270), makes the attempt.

To music, therefore never built at all,
And therefore built forever."[1]

Gareth spake
275 Anger'd, "Old Master, reverence thine own beard
That looks as white as utter[2] truth, and seems
Well nigh as long as thou art statured tall!
Why mockest thou the stranger that hath been
To thee fair-spoken?"

But the Seer replied,
280 "Know ye not then the Riddling of the Bards?[3]
'Confusion, and illusion, and relation,
Elusion, and occasion, and evasion?'
I mock thee not but as thou mockest me,[4]
And all that see thee, for thou art not who
285 Thou seemest, but I know thee who thou art.[5]
And now thou goest up to mock the King,
Who cannot brook the shadow of any lie."

Unmockingly the mocker ending here
Turn'd to the right, and past along the plain;
290 Whom Gareth looking after, said, "My men,
Our one white lie[6] sits like a little ghost
Here on the threshold of our enterprise.
Let love be blamed for it, not she, nor I:
Well, we will make amends."

With all good cheer
295 He spake and laugh'd, then enter'd with his twain
Camelot, a city of shadowy palaces,
And stately, rich in emblem and the work

[1] Because Arthur's rule is founded upon noble ideals it is not easy to think of it as having been made, and yet for this same reason it cannot pass away.

[2] absolute.

[3] the ancient Welsh poets: a part of their poetry consisted of riddles in verse.

[4] See l. 253.

[5] See Luke iv. 34.

[6] The "one white lie" was pretending to be what he was not.

Of ancient Kings who did their days in stone;[1]
Which Merlin's hand, the Mage at Arthur's court,
300 Knowing all the arts, had touch'd and everywhere
At Arthur's ordinance, tipt with lessening peak
And pinnacle, and had made it spire to heaven.
And ever and anon a knight would pass
Outward, or inward to the hall: his arms
305 Clash'd; and the sound was good to Gareth's ear.
And out of bower and casement shyly glanced
Eyes of pure women, wholesome stars of love;
And all about a healthful people stept
As in the presence of a gracious king.[2]

310 Then into hall Gareth ascending heard
A voice, the voice of Arthur, and beheld
Far over heads in that long-vaulted hall
The splendor of the presence of the King
Throned, and delivering doom[3]—and look'd no more—
315 But felt his young heart hammering in his ears,
And thought, "For this half-shadow of a lie
The truthful King will doom me when I speak."
Yet pressing on, tho' all in fear to find
Sir Gawain or Sir Modred,[4] saw nor one
320 Nor other, but in all the listening eyes
Of those tall knights, that ranged about the throne,
Clear honor shining like the dewy star
Of dawn, and faith in their great King, with pure
Affection, and the light of victory,
325 And glory gain'd, and evermore to gain.

Then came a widow crying to the King,
"A boon,[5] Sir King! Thy father, Uther, reft

[1] who had the deeds of their time carved in stone.

[2] The place was in keeping with Gareth's enthusiastic ideals.

[3] judgment.

[4] his brothers. See note on ll. 25, 26, and also ll. 408, 409.

[5] favor.

From my dead lord a field with violence:
For howsoe'er at first he proffer'd gold,
330 Yet, for the field was pleasant in our eyes,
We yielded not; and then he reft us of it
Perforce, and left us neither gold nor field."

Said Arthur, "Whether[1] would ye? gold or field?"
To whom the woman weeping, "Nay, my lord,
335 The field was pleasant in my husband's eye."

And Arthur, "Have thy pleasant field again,
And thrice the gold for Uther's use thereof,
According to the years. No boon is here,
But justice, so thy say be proven true.
340 Accursed, who from wrongs his father did
Would shape himself a right!"

And while she past,
Came yet another widow crying to him,
"A boon, Sir King! Thine enemy, King, am I.
With thine own hand thou slewest my dear lord,
345 A knight of Uther in the Barons' war,[2]
When Lot and many another rose and fought
Against thee, saying thou wert basely born.
I held with these, and loathe to ask thee aught.
Yet lo! my husband's brother had my son
350 Thrall'd in his castle, and hath starved him dead;
And standeth seized[3] of that inheritance
Which thou that slewest the sire hast left the son.
So tho' I scarce can ask it thee for hate,
Grant me some knight to do the battle for me,
355 Kill the foul thief, and wreak[4] me for my son."

[1] which of the two.
[2] the Barons' war against Arthur before his supremacy and title to the throne were acknowledged. See lines 75, 76.
[3] a legal term for *possessed of*.
[4] revenge.

Then strode a good knight forward, crying to him,
"A boon, Sir King! I am her kinsman, I.
Give me to right her wrong, and slay the man."

Then came Sir Kay, the seneschal,[1] and cried,
360 "A boon, Sir King! ev'n that thou grant her none,
This railer, that hath mock'd thee in full hall—
None; or the wholesome boon of gyve and gag."

But Arthur, "We sit King, to help the wrong'd
Thro' all our realm. The woman loves her lord.
365 Peace to thee, woman, with thy loves and hates!
The kings of old had doom'd thee to the flames,
Aurelius Emrys[2] would have scourged thee dead,
And Uther slit thy tongue; but get thee hence—
Lest that rough humor of the kings of old
370 Return upon me! Thou that art her kin,
Go likewise; lay him low and slay him not,
But bring him here, that I may judge the right,
According to the justice of the King:
Then, be he guilty, by that deathless King
375 Who lived and died for men, the man shall die.'

Then came in hall the messenger of Mark,[3]
A name of evil savor in the land,
The Cornish king. In either hand he bore
What dazzled all, and shone far-off as shines
380 A field of charlock[4] in the sudden sun
Between two showers, a cloth of palest gold,
Which down he laid before the throne, and knelt,
Delivering,[5] that his Lord, the vassal king,

[1] Sir Kay is one of the familiar figures among Arthur's knights in the old romances. He was the seneschal or steward, the keeper of the king's castle.

[2] Aurelius Emrys and Uther were brothers. The latter was king before Arthur, the former before Uther.

[3] Mark, king of Cornwall, a "vassal king" or dependent lord of Arthur, is the type of cowardly meanness elsewhere in the poems of the *Idylls of the King*, as Modred is the type of envious cunning.

[4] the yellow wild mustard plant.

[5] giving the message.

Was ev'n upon his way to Camelot;
385 For having heard that Arthur of his grace
Had made his goodly cousin, Tristram, knight,[1]
And, for himself was of the greater state,
Being a king, he trusted his liege-lord
Would yield him this large honor all the more;
390 So pray'd him well to accept this cloth of gold,
In token of true heart and fealty.[2]

Then Arthur cried to rend the cloth, to rend
In pieces and so cast it on the hearth.
An oak-tree[3] smouldered there. "The goodly knight![4]
395 What! shall the shield of Mark stand among these?"
For midway down the side of that long hall
A stately pile,—whereof along the front
Some blazon'd,[5] some but carven, and some blank,
There ran a treble range of stony shields,—
400 Rose and high-arching overbrow'd the hearth.
And under every shield a knight was named;
For this was Arthur's custom in his hall;
When some good knight had done one noble deed,
His arms were carven only; but if twain
405 His arms were blazon'd also; but if none
The shield was blank and bare without a sign
Saving the name beneath; and Gareth saw
The shield of Gawain blazon'd rich and bright,
And Modred's blank as death; and Arthur cried
410 To rend the cloth and cast it on the hearth.[6]

"More like are we to reave[7] him of his crown
Than make him knight because men call him king.

[1] The king had power to raise whom he would to the order of knighthood.

[2] faithful service.

[3] The hearth was so large that the trunk of a great tree could be put in it.

[4] Arthur speaks in scorn, as though he had said, "A fine knight *he* would be."

[5] This is the word in the science of heraldry for portraying in the right colors.

[6] These words take up the story after the description.

[7] *To reave* is to *take away*. The construction is the same as after "deprive."

The kings we found, ye know we stay'd their hands
From war among themselves, but left them kings;
415 Of whom were any bounteous, merciful,
Truth-speaking, brave, good livers, them we enroll'd
Among us, and they sit within our hall.
But Mark hath tarnish'd the great name of king,
As Mark would sully the low state of churl:
420 And seeing he hath sent us cloth of gold,
Return, and meet, and hold him from our eyes,
Lest we should lap him up in cloth of lead,[1]
Silenced forever—craven—a man of plots,
Craft, poisonous counsels, wayside ambushings—
425 No fault of thine: let Kay, the seneschal,
Look to thy wants, and send thee satisfied—
Accursed, who strikes nor lets the hand be seen!"

And many another suppliant crying came
With noise of ravage wrought by beast and man,
430 And evermore a knight would ride away.

Last Gareth leaning both hands heavily
Down on the shoulders of the twain, his men,
Approach'd between them toward the King, and ask'd,
"A boon, Sir King (his voice was all ashamed),
435 For see ye not how weak and hunger-worn
I seem—leaning on these? grant me to serve
For meat and drink among the kitchen-knaves
A twelvemonth and a day, nor seek my name.
Hereafter I will fight."[2]

To him the King,
440 "A goodly youth and worth a goodlier boon!
But an thou wilt no goodlier, then must Kay,
The master of the meats and drinks be thine."[3]

[1] Lead was used for coffins; *lap* is the same word as *wrap*.

[2] He cannot help expressing his real hopes.

[3] rather a condensed construction. Kay is to be master of Gareth as well as of the meats and drinks.

He rose and past; then Kay, a man of mien
Wan-sallow as the plant that feels itself
445 Root-bitten by white lichen,

"Lo ye now!
This fellow hath broken from some Abbey, where,
God wot, he had not beef and brewis enow,
However that might chance! but an he work,
Like any pigeon will I cram his crop,
450 And sleeker shall he shine than any hog."

Then Lancelot[1] standing near, "Sir Seneschal,
Sleuth-hound thou knowest, and gray, and all the hounds;
A horse thou knowest, a man thou dost not know:
Broad brows and fair, a fluent[2] hair and fine,
455 High nose, a nostril large and fine, and hands
Large, fair and fine!—Some young lad's mystery—
But, or from sheepcot or king's hall, the boy
Is noble-natured. Treat him with all grace,
Lest he should come to shame thy judging of him."

460 Then Kay, "What murmurest thou of mystery?
Think ye this fellow will poison the King's dish?
Nay, for he spake too fool-like: mystery!
Tut, an the lad were noble, he had ask'd
For horse and armor: fair and fine, forsooth!
465 Sir Fine-face, Sir Fair-hands? but see thou to it
That thine own fineness, Lancelot, some fine day
Undo thee not—and leave my man to me."

So Gareth all for glory underwent
The sooty yoke of kitchen-vassalage;[3]

[1] Lancelot is the chief of Arthur's knights, the most courteous, the bravest, and the greatest in everything that belonged to knighthood.

[2] flowing. We say "a fluent speech," but do not often use the word for material things.

[3] See l. 157.

470 Ate with young lads his portion by the door,
And couch'd at night with grimy kitchen-knaves.
And Lancelot ever spake him pleasantly,
But Kay the seneschal who loved him not
Would hustle and harry him, and labor him
475 Beyond his comrade of the hearth, and set
To turn the broach,[1] draw water, or hew wood,
Or grosser tasks; and Gareth bow'd himself
With all obedience to the King, and wrought
All kind of service with a noble ease
480 That graced the lowliest act in doing it.
And when the thralls had talk among themselves
And one would praise the love that linkt the King
And Lancelot—how the King had saved his life
In battle twice, and Lancelot once the King's—
485 For Lancelot was the first in Tournament,
But Arthur mightiest on the battlefield—
Gareth was glad. Or if some other told,
How once the wandering forester at dawn,
Far over the blue tarns and hazy seas,
490 On Caer-Eryri's[2] highest found the King
A naked babe, of whom the Prophet spake,
"He passes to the Isle Avilion,[3]
He passes and is heal'd and cannot die"—
Gareth was glad. But if their talk were foul,
495 Then would he whistle rapid as any lark,
Or carol some old roundelay, and so loud
That first they mock'd, but, after, reverenced him.
Or Gareth telling some prodigious tale
Of knights, who sliced a red life-bubbling[4] way
500 Thro' twenty folds of twisted dragon, held
All in a gap-mouth'd circle his good mates
Lying or sitting round him, idle hands,

[1] the great spit.
[2] apparently Mt. Snowdon.
[3] a mythical island, a sort of paradise on earth.
[4] because the life-blood gushed out.

Charm'd; till Sir Kay, the seneschal, would come
Blustering upon them, like a sudden wind
505 Among dead leaves, and drive them all apart.
Or when the thralls had sport among themselves,
So there were any trial of mastery,
He, by two yards in casting bar or stone
Was counted best; and if there chanced a joust,
510 So that Sir Kay nodded him leave to go,
Would hurry thither, and when he saw the knights
Clash like the coming and retiring wave,
And the spear spring, and good horse reel, the boy
Was half beyond himself for ecstasy.

515 So for a month he wrought among the thralls;
But in the weeks that follow'd, the good Queen,
Repentant of the word she made him swear,
And saddening in her childless castle, sent,
Between the increscent and decrescent moon,[1]
520 Arms for her son, and loosed him from his vow.

This, Gareth hearing from a squire of Lot
With whom he used to play at tourney once,
When both were children, and in lonely haunts
Would scratch a ragged oval on the sand,[2]
525 And each at either dash from either end—
Shame never made girl redder than Gareth joy.
He laugh'd; he sprang. "Out of the smoke, at once
I leap from Satan's foot to Peter's knee[3]—
These news be mine, none other's—nay, the King's—
530 Descend into the city:" whereon he sought
The King alone, and found, and told him all.

"I have stagger'd thy strong Gawain in a tilt
For pastime; yea he said it: joust can I.

[1] increasing and decreasing. *Increscent*, like *fluent*, is nearer the Latin form.
[2] in imitation of the oval lists or enclosures in which the tournaments were held.
[3] From Hell to Heaven, of which Peter holds the keys.

Make me thy knight—in secret! let my name
535 Be hidd'n, and give me the first quest, I spring
Like flame from ashes."

Here the King's calm eye
Fell on, and check'd, and made him flush, and bow
Lowly, to kiss his hand, who answer'd him,
"Son, the good mother let me know thee here,
540 And sent her wish that I would yield thee thine.[1]
Make thee my knight? my knights are sworn to vows
Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness,
And, loving, utter faithfulness in love,
And uttermost obedience to the King."

545 Then Gareth, lightly springing from his knees,
"My King, for hardihood I can promise thee.
For uttermost obedience make demand
Of whom ye gave me to, the Seneschal,
No mellow master of the meats and drinks!
550 And as for love, God wot, I love not yet,
But love I shall, God willing."

And the King—
"Make thee my knight in secret? yea, but he,
Our noblest brother, and our truest man,
And one with me in all, he needs must know."

555 "Let Lancelot know, my King, let Lancelot know,
Thy noblest and thy truest!"

And the King—
"But wherefore would ye men should wonder at you?
Nay, rather for the sake of me, their King,
And the deed's sake my knighthood do the deed,
560 Than to be noised of."

[1] give you the honor which is rightly yours.

Merrily Gareth ask'd,
"Have I not earned my cake in baking of it?
Let be my name until I make my name![1]
My deeds will speak: it is but for a day."
So with a kindly hand on Gareth's arm
565 Smiled the great King, and half unwillingly
Loving his lusty youthhood yielded to him.
Then, after summoning Lancelot privily,
"I have given him the first quest: he is not proven.
Look therefore when he calls for this in hall,
570 Thou get to horse and follow him far away.
Cover the lions on thy shield,[2] and see
Far as thou mayest, he be nor ta'en nor slain."

Then that same day there past into the hall
A damsel of high lineage, and a brow
575 May-blossom, and a cheek of apple-blossom,
Hawk-eyes; and lightly was her slender nose
Tip-tilted like the petal of a flower;
She into hall past with her page and cried,

"O King, for thou hast driven the foe without,
580 See to the foe within! bridge, ford, beset
By bandits, every one that owns a tower
The Lord for half a league.[3] Why sit ye there?
Rest would I not, Sir King, an I were king,
Till ev'n the lonest hold[4] were all as free
585 From cursed bloodshed, as thine altar-cloth
From that blest blood it is a sin to spill."

"Comfort thyself," said Arthur, "I nor mine
Rest: so my knighthood keep the vows they swore,
The wastest moorland of our realm shall be

[1] Never mind my name till I can make one.

[2] Lancelot even in his armor was known by the device on his shield. See l. 1273.

[3] That is, master of the territory just around about his castle.

[4] castle.

590 Safe, damsel, as the centre of this hall.
What is thy name? thy need?"

"My name?" she said—
"Lynette my name; noble; my need, a knight
To combat for my sister, Lyonors,
A lady of high lineage, of great lands,
595 And comely, yea, and comelier than myself.
She lives in Castle Perilous: a river
Runs in three loops about her living-place;
And o'er it are three passings, and three knights
Defend the passings, brethren, and a fourth,
600 And of that four the mightiest, holds her stay'd
In her own castle and so besieges her
To break her will, and make her wed with him:
And but[1] delays his purport till thou send
To do the battle with him, thy chief man
605 Sir Lancelot whom he trusts to overthrow,
Then wed, with glory; but she will not wed
Save whom she loveth, or a holy life.[2]
Now therefore have I come for Lancelot."

Then Arthur mindful of Sir Gareth ask'd,
610 "Damsel, ye know this Order[3] lives to crush
All wrongers of the Realm. But say, these four,
Who be they? What the fashion of the men?"

"They be of foolish fashion, O Sir King,
The fashion of that old[4] knight-errantry
615 Who ride abroad and do but what they will;
Courteous or bestial from the moment,
Such as have nor law nor king: and three of these
Proud in their fantasy call themselves, the Day,

[1] only.

[2] To "wed a holy life" was to become a nun.

[3] the order of Arthur's knights.

[4] before the time of Arthur, whose knights had higher aims.

Morning-Star, and Noon-Sun, and Evening-Star,
620 Being strong fools; and never a whit more wise
The fourth who always rideth arm'd in black,
A huge man-beast of boundless savagery.
He names himself the Night and oftener Death,
And wears a helmet mounted with a skull
625 And bears a skeleton figured on his arms,
To show that who may slay or scape the three
Slain by himself shall enter endless night.
And all these four be fools, but mighty men,
And therefore am I come for Lancelot."[1]

630 Hereat Sir Gareth call'd from where he rose,
A head with kindling eyes above the throng,
"A boon, Sir King—this quest!" then—for he mark'd
Kay near him groaning like a wounded bull—
"Yea, King, thou knowest thy kitchen-knave am I,[2]
635 And mighty thro' thy meats and drinks am I,
And I can topple over a hundred such.
Thy promise, King," and Arthur glancing at him,
Brought down a momentary brow. "Rough, sudden,
And pardonable, worthy to be knight—
640 Go therefore," and all hearers were amazed.

But on the damsel's forehead shame, pride, wrath,
Slew the May-white; she lifted either arm,
"Fie on thee, King! I ask'd for thy chief knight,
And thou hast given me but a kitchen-knave."
645 Then ere a man in hall could stay her, turn'd,
Fled down the lane of access to the King,
Took horse, descended the slope street,[3] and past
The weird white gate, and paused without, beside
The field of tourney, murmuring "kitchen-knave."

[1] Lynette is impetuous (ll. 579–582) and persistent.

[2] The sight of Kay makes Gareth emphasize that which he knows will disgust him most.

[3] Camelot was a "high city," and the palace was on the summit.

650 Now two great entries open'd from the hall,
At one end one, that gave upon a range
Of level pavement where the King could pace
At sunrise, gazing over plain and wood;
And down from this a lordly stairway sloped
655 Till lost in blowing trees and tops of towers.[1]
And out by this main doorway past the King.
But one was counter to[2] the hearth, and rose
High that the highest-crested helm could ride
Therethro' nor graze: and by this entry fled
660 The damsel in her wrath, and on to this
Sir Gareth strode, and saw without the door
King Arthur's gift, the worth of half a town,
A war-horse of the best, and near it stood
The two that out of north had follow'd him.
665 This[3] bare a maiden shield, a casque;[4] that held
The horse, the spear; whereat Sir Gareth loosed
A cloak that dropped from collar-bone to heel,
A cloth of roughest web, and cast it down,
And from it like a fuel-smother'd fire,
670 That lookt half-dead, brake bright, and flash'd as those
Dull-coated things, that making slide apart
Their dusk wing-cases, all beneath there burns
A jewel'd harness, ere they pass and fly.
So Gareth ere he parted flash'd in arms.
675 Then while he donn'd[5] the helm, and took the shield
And mounted horse and graspt a spear, of grain
Storm-strengthened on a windy site, and tipt
With trenchant[6] steel, around him slowly prest
The people, and from out of kitchen came
680 The thralls in throng, and seeing who had work'd
Lustier than any, and whom they could but love,

[1] The hill was so steep that from above, the road seemed to run among the tops of houses.
[2] opposite.
[3] *this*, one of the two; *that*, the other.
[4] helmet.
[5] put on.
[6] good for cutting.

Mounted in arms, threw up their caps and cried,
"God bless the King, and all his fellowship!"
And on thro' lanes of shouting Gareth rode
685 Down the slope street, and past without the gate.

So Gareth past with joy; but as the cur
Pluckt from the cur he fights with, ere his cause
Be cool'd by fighting, follows, being named,
His owner, but remembers all, and growls
690 Remembering, so Sir Kay beside the door
Mutter'd in scorn of Gareth whom he used
To harry and hustle.

"Bound upon a quest
With horse and arms—the King hath past his time[1]—
My scullion knave! Thralls to your work again.
695 For an your fire be low ye kindle mine![2]
Will there be dawn in West and eve in East?[3]
Begone!—my knave!—belike and like enow
Some old head-blow[4] not heeded in his youth
So shook his wits they wander in his prime—
700 Crazed! How the villain lifted up his voice.
Nor shamed to bawl himself a kitchen-knave.
Tut: he was tame and meek enow with me,
Till peacock'd up with Lancelot's noticing.
Well—I will after my loud knave, and learn
705 Whether he know me for his master yet.
Out of the smoke he came, and so my lance
Hold, by God's grace, he shall into the mire—
Thence, if the King awaken from his craze,
Into the smoke again."

But Lancelot said,
710 "Kay, wherefore will ye go against the King,

[1] He is in his dotage.
[2] *My fire* is metaphorical.
[3] Is the order of everything to be reversed?
[4] If not in his dotage, something is wrong with his mind: it may be that some old wound has unsettled him.

For that did never he[1] whereon ye rail,
But ever meekly served the King in thee?
Abide: take counsel; for this lad is great
And lusty, and knowing both of lance and sword."
715 "Tut, tell not me," said Kay, "ye are over-fine
To mar stout knaves with foolish courtesies."
Then mounted, on thro' silent faces[2] rode
Down the slope city, and out beyond the gate.

But by the field of tourney lingering yet
720 Muttered the damsel, "Wherefore did the King
Scorn me? for, were Sir Lancelot lackt, at least
He might have yielded to me one of those
Who tilt for lady's love and glory here,
Rather than—O sweet heaven! O fie upon him—
725 His kitchen-knave."

To whom Sir Gareth drew
(And there were none but few goodlier than he)
Shining in arms, "Damsel, the quest is mine.
Lead, and I follow." She thereat, as one
That smells a foul-flesh'd agaric[3] in the holt,[4]
730 And deems it carrion of some woodland thing,
Or shrew, or weasel, nipt her slender nose
With petulant thumb and finger, shrilling,[5] "Hence!
Avoid, thou smellest all of kitchen-grease.
And look who comes behind," for there was Kay.
735 "Knowest thou not me? thy master? I am Kay.
We lack thee by the hearth."

And Gareth to him,
"Master no more! too well I know thee, ay—
The most ungentle knight in Arthur's hall."

[1] Gareth.
[2] The people had no love for him as they had for Gareth (l. 684).
[3] a mushroom.
[4] the wood.
[5] crying in a shrill voice.

"Have at thee then," said Kay; they shock'd, and Kay
740 Fell shoulder-slipt,[1] and Gareth cried again,
"Lead, and I follow," and fast away she fled.

But after sod and shingle[2] ceased to fly
Behind her, and the heart of her good horse
Was nigh to burst with violence of the beat,
745 Perforce she stay'd, and overtaken spoke.
"What doest thou, scullion, in my fellowship?
Deem'st thou that I accept thee aught the more,
Or love thee better, that by some device
Full cowardly, or by mere unhappiness,
750 Thou hast overthrown and slain thy master—thou!—
Dish-washer and broach-turner, loon!—to me
Thou smellest all of kitchen as before."

"Damsel," Sir Gareth answer'd gently, "say
Whate'er ye will, but whatsoe'er ye say,
755 I leave not till I finish this fair quest,
Or die therefor."

"Ay, wilt thou finish it?
Sweet lord, how like a noble knight he talks!
The listening rogue hath caught the manner of it.
But, knave, anon thou shalt be met with,[3] knave,
760 And then by such a one that thou for all
The kitchen brewis[4] that was ever supt
Shalt not once dare to look him in the face."

"I shall assay,"[5] said Gareth with a smile
That madden'd her, and away she flash'd again
765 Down the long avenues of boundless wood,
And Gareth following was again beknaved.[6]

[1] His shoulder dislocated.
[2] coarse gravel.
[3] As we say "come up with."
[4] Thickened soup or broth.
[5] attempt.
[6] called a knave.

"Sir Kitchen-knave, I have miss'd the only way
Where Arthur's men are set along the wood;
The wood is nigh as full of thieves as leaves:
770 If both be slain, I am rid of thee; but yet,
Sir Scullion, canst thou use that spit[1] of thine?
Fight, an thou canst: I have miss'd the only way."

So till the dusk that followed even-song
Rode on the two, reviler and reviled:
775 Then after one long slope was mounted, saw,
Bowl-shaped, thro' tops of many thousand pines,
A gloomy-gladed hollow slowly sink
To westward—in the deeps whereof a mere,[2]
Round as the red eye of an Eagle-owl,
780 Under the half-dead sunset glared; and cries
Ascended, and there brake a serving-man
Flying from out of the black wood, and crying,
"They have bound my lord to cast him in the mere."
Then Gareth, "Bound am I to right the wrong'd,
785 But straitlier bound am I to bide with thee."
And when the damsel spake contemptuously,
"Lead and I follow," Gareth cried again,
"Follow, I lead!" so down among the pines
He plunged, and there, black-shadow'd nigh the mere,
790 And mid-thigh-deep, in bulrushes and reed,
Saw six tall men haling[3] a seventh along,
A stone about his neck, to drown him in it.
Three with good blows he quieted, but three
Fled thro' the pines; and Gareth loosed the stone
795 From off his neck, then in the mere beside
Tumbled it; oilily bubbled up the mere.
Last, Gareth loosed his bonds and on free feet
Set him a stalwart Baron, Arthur's friend.

[1] She calls his lance a spit because he had been in the kitchen.

[2] a little pond.

[3] an older form of *hauling*.

"Well that ye came, or else these caitiff[1] rogues
800 Had wreak'd themselves on me; good cause is theirs
To hate me, for my wont hath ever been
To catch my thief, and then like vermin here
Drown him, and with a stone about his neck;
And under this wan water many of them
805 Lie rotting, but at night let go the stone,
And rise, and flickering in a grimly light
Dance on the mere. Good now, ye have saved a life
Worth somewhat as the cleanser of this wood.
And fain would I reward thee worshipfully.
810 What guerdon will ye?"

Gareth sharply spake,
"None! for the deed's sake have I done the deed,
In uttermost obedience to the King.
But will ye yield this damsel harborage?"

Whereat the Baron saying, "I well believe
815 Ye be of Arthur's Table," a light laugh
Broke from Lynette, "Ay, truly of a truth,
And in a sort, being Arthur's kitchen-knave!—
But deem not I accept thee aught the more,
Scullion, for running sharply with thy spit
820 Down on a rout[2] of craven foresters.
A thresher with his flail had scatter'd them.
Nay—for thou smellest of the kitchen still.
But an this lord will yield us harborage,
Well."

So she spake. A league beyond the wood,
825 All in a full-fair manor and a rich,
His towers where that day a feast had been
Held in high hall, and many a viand left,

[1] villainous. [2] used contemptuously, as we might say a *mob*.

And many a costly cate,[1] received the three.
And there they placed a peacock in his pride[2]
830 Before the damsel, and the Baron set
Gareth beside her, but at once she rose.

"Meseems[3] that here is much discourtesy,
Setting this knave, Lord Baron, at my side.
Hear me—this morn I stood in Arthur's hall,
835 And pray'd the King would grant me Lancelot
To fight the brotherhood of Day and Night—
The last a monster unsubduable
Of any save of him for whom I call'd—
Suddenly bawls this frontless[4] kitchen-knave,
840 'The quest is mine; thy kitchen-knave am I,
And mighty thro' thy meats and drinks am I.'
Then Arthur all at once gone mad replies,
'Go therefore,' and so gives the quest to him—
Him—here—a villain[5] fitter to stick swine
845 Than ride abroad redressing women's wrong,
Or sit beside a noble gentlewoman."

Then half-ashamed and part amazed, the lord
Now look'd at one and now at other, left
The damsel by the peacock in his pride,
850 And, seating Gareth at another board,[6]
Sat down beside him, ate and then began.

"Friend, whether ye be kitchen-knave, or not,
Or whether it be the maiden's fantasy,
And whether she be mad, or else the King,
855 Or both or neither, or thyself be mad,
I ask not; but thou strikest a strong stroke,

[1] an article of food.

[2] A peacock with his tail spread was called in the books of heraldry "a peacock in his pride."

[3] It seems to me.

[4] shameless.

[5] See note on l. 157, where the word is used as an adjective.

[6] a side-table.

For strong thou art and goodly therewithal,
And saver of my life; and therefore now,
For here be mighty men to joust with, weigh
860 Whether thou wilt not with thy damsel back
To crave again Sir Lancelot of the King.[1]
Thy pardon; I but speak for thine avail,
The saver of my life."

And Gareth said,
"Full pardon, but I follow up the quest,
865 Despite of Day and Night and Death and Hell."[2]

So when, next morn, the lord whose life he saved
Had, some brief space, convey'd them on their way
And left them with God-speed, Sir Gareth spake,
"Lead, and I follow." Haughtily she replied,

870 "I fly no more: I allow thee for an hour.
Lion and stoat have isled[3] together, knave,
In time of flood. Nay, furthermore, methinks
Some ruth[4] is mine for thee. Back wilt thou, fool?
For hard by here is one who will overthrow
875 And slay thee: then will I to court again,
And shame the King for only yielding me
My champion from the ashes of his hearth."

To whom Sir Gareth answer'd courteously,
"Say thou thy say, and I will do my deed.
880 Allow me for mine hour, and thou wilt find
My fortunes all as fair as hers, who lay
Among the ashes and wedded the King's son."[5]

Then to the shore of one of those long loops
Wherethro' the serpent river coil'd, they came.

[1] To ask the king to send Lancelot.
[2] Gareth goes a step farther than the allegory, meaning that nothing shall daunt him.
[3] have climbed for safety on an islet.
[4] pity.
[5] Cinderella.

885 Rough thicketed were the banks and steep; the stream
Full, narrow; this a bridge of single arc
Took at a leap; and on the further side
Arose a silk pavilion, gay with gold
In streaks and rays, and all Lent-lily[1] in hue
890 Save that the dome was purple, and above,
Crimson, a slender banneret fluttering.
And therebefore the lawless warrior paced
Unarm'd, and calling, "Damsel, is this he,
The champion ye have brought from Arthur's hall?
895 For whom we let thee pass." "Nay, nay," she said,
"Sir Morning-Star. The King in utter scorn
Of thee and thy much folly hath sent thee here
His kitchen-knave: and look thou to thyself:
See that he fall not on thee suddenly,
900 And slay thee unarm'd: he is not knight but knave."

Then at his call, "O daughters of the Dawn,
And servants of the Morning-Star, approach,
Arm me," from out the silken curtain-folds
Barefooted and bareheaded three fair girls
905 In gilt and rosy raiment came: their feet
In dewy grasses glisten'd; and the hair
All over glanced with dewdrop or with gem
Like sparkles in the stone Avanturine.[2]
These arm'd him in blue arms, and gave a shield
910 Blue also, and thereon the morning star.
And Gareth silent gazed upon the knight,
Who stood a moment, ere his horse was brought,
Glorying; and in the stream beneath him, shone,
Immingled with Heaven's azure waveringly,
915 The gay pavilion and the naked feet,
His arms, the rosy raiment, and the star.

[1] The "Lent-lily" is the yellow daffodil. [2] a kind of quartz, containing mica

Then she that watch'd him,[1] "Wherefore stare ye so?
Thou shakest in thy fear: there yet is time:
Flee down the valley before he get to horse.
920 Who will cry shame? Thou art not knight but knave."

Said Gareth, "Damsel, whether knave or knight,
Far liefer had I fight a score of times
Than hear thee so missay[2] me and revile.
Fair words were best for him who fights for thee;
925 But truly foul are better, for they send
That strength of anger thro' mine arms, I know
That I shall overthrow him."

And he that bore
The star, being mounted, cried from o'er the bridge,
"A kitchen-knave, and sent in scorn of me!
930 Such fight not I, but answer scorn with scorn.
For this were shame to do him further wrong
Than set him on his feet, and take his horse
And arms, and so return him to the King.
Come, therefore, leave thy lady lightly, knave.
935 Avoid: for it beseemeth not a knave
To ride with such a lady."

"Dog, thou liest.
I spring from loftier lineage than thine own."
He spake; and all at fiery speed the two
Shock'd on the central bridge, and either spear
940 Bent but not brake, and either knight at once,
Hurl'd as a stone from out of a catapult
Beyond his horse's crupper and the bridge,
Fell, as if dead; but quickly rose and drew,
And Gareth lash'd so fiercely with his brand
945 He drave his enemy backward down the bridge,

[1] Lynette. [2] speak wrongly of me.

The damsel crying, "Well-stricken, kitchen-knave!"
Till Gareth's shield was cloven; but one stroke
Laid him that clove it grovelling on the ground.[1]

Then cried the fall'n, "Take not my life: I yield."
950 And Gareth, "So this damsel ask it of me
Good—I accord it easily as a grace."
She reddening, "Insolent scullion: I of thee?
I bound to thee for any favor ask'd!"
"Then shall he die."[2] And Gareth there unlaced
955 His helmet as[3] to slay him, but she shriek'd,
"Be not so hardy, scullion, as to slay
One nobler than thyself." "Damsel, thy charge
Is an abounding pleasure to me. Knight,
Thy life is thine at her command. Arise
960 And quickly pass to Arthur's hall, and say
His kitchen-knave hath sent thee. See thou crave
His pardon for thy breaking of his laws.
Myself, when I return, will plead for thee.
Thy shield is mine[4]—farewell; and, damsel, thou
965 Lead, and I follow."

And fast away she fled.
Then when he came upon her, spake, "Methought,[5]
Knave, when I watch'd thee striking on the bridge
The savor of thy kitchen came upon me
A little faintlier: but the wind hath changed:
970 I scent it twentyfold." And then she sang,
"'O morning star' (not that tall felon there
Whom thou by sorcery or unhappiness[6]

[1] The combats between Gareth and the brothers have an allegorical meaning, for which see p. 10.

[2] That is, if you will not ask for his life.

[3] as i .

[4] He takes the shield of the Morning-Star. See ll. 1008, 1011.

[5] It seemed to me. *Me* is here the dative.

[6] mischance.

Or some device, hast foully overthrown),
'O morning star that smilest in the blue,
975 O star, my morning dream hath proven true,
Smile sweetly, thou! my love hath smiled on me.'[1]

"But thou begone, take counsel, and away,
For hard by here is one that guards a ford—
The second brother in their fool's parable[2] —
980 Will pay thee all thy wages, and to boot.[3]
Care not for shame: thou art not knight but knave."

To whom Sir Gareth answer'd, laughingly,
"Parables? Hear a parable of the knave.
When I was a kitchen-knave among the rest
985 Fierce was the hearth, and one of my co-mates
Own'd a rough dog, to whom he cast his coat,
'Guard it,' and there was none to meddle with it.[4]
And such a coat art thou, and thee the King
Gave me to guard, and such a dog am I,
990 To worry, and not to flee—and—knight or knave—
The knave that doth thee service as full knight
Is all as good, meseems, as any knight
Toward thy sister's freeing."

"Ay, Sir Knave!
Ay, knave, because thou strikest as a knight,
995 Being but knave, I hate thee all the more."

"Fair damsel, ye should worship[5] me the more,
That, being but knave, I throw thine enemies."

"Ay, ay," she said, "but thou shalt meet thy match."

[1] These songs of Lynette are, of course, Tennyson's way of showing the gradual change of her feeling.

[2] See l. 1169 f.

[3] in addition.

[4] No one dared to touch it.

[5] *Worship* and *honor* in the old romances have much the same sense.

So when they touch'd the second riverloop,
1000 Huge on a huge red horse, and all in mail
Burnish'd to blinding, shone the Noonday Sun
Beyond a raging shallow. As if the flower,
That blows a globe of after arrowlets,
Ten thousandfold had grown, flash'd the fierce shield,
1005 All sun; and Gareth's eyes had flying blots
Before them when he turn'd from watching him.
He from behind the roaring shallow roar'd
"What doest thou, brother,[1] in my marches[2] here?"
And she athwart the shallow shrill'd again,
1010 "Here is a kitchen-knave from Arthur's hall
Hath overthrown thy brother, and hath his arms."
"Ugh!" cried the Sun, and vizoring up[3] a red
And cipher face of rounded foolishness,
Push'd horse across the foamings of the ford,
1015 Whom Gareth met midstream; no room was there
For lance or tourney-skill: four strokes they struck
With sword, and these were mighty; the new knight
Had fear he might be shamed; but as the Sun
Heaved up a ponderous arm to strike the fifth,
1020 The hoof of his horse slipt in the stream, the stream
Descended, and the Sun was wash'd away.

Then Gareth laid his lance athwart the ford;
So drew him home; but he that would not fight,
As being all bone-battered on the rock,
1025 Yielded; and Gareth sent him to the King.
"Myself when I return will plead for thee.
Lead, and I follow." Quietly she led.
"Hath not the good wind, damsel, changed again?"[4]
"Nay, not a point:[5] nor art thou victor here.

[1] He thought Gareth was the Morning-Star, because he had taken his shield.
[2] boundaries.
[3] covering by closing his visor.
[4] See l. 969.
[5] not a point of the compass, by which the wind is commonly reckoned. Lynette will not yet admit that she was wrong.

1030 There lies a ridge of slate across the ford;
His horse thereon stumbled—ay, for I saw it.

"'O Sun' (not this strong fool who thou, Sir Knave,
Hast overthrown thro' mere unhappiness),
'O Sun, that wakenest all to bliss or pain,
1035 O moon, that layest all to sleep again,
Shine sweetly: twice my love hath smiled on me.'

"What knowest thou[1] of lovesong or of love?
Nay, nay, God wot, so thou wert nobly born,
Thou hast a pleasant presence. Yea, perchance,[2]——

1040 "'O dewy flowers that open to the sun,
O dewy flowers that close when day is done,
Blow sweetly: twice my love hath smiled on me.'

"What knowest thou of flowers, except, belike,
To garnish meats with? hath not our good King
1045 Who lent me thee, the flower of kitchendom,
A foolish love for flowers? what stick ye round
The pasty? wherewithal deck the boar's head?
Flowers? nay, the boar hath rosemaries and bay.

"'O birds, that warble to the morning sky,
1050 O birds, that warble as the day goes by,
Sing sweetly: twice my love hath smiled on me.'

"What knowest thou of birds, lark, mavis,[3] merle,[4]
Linnet? what dream ye when they utter forth
May-music growing with the growing light,
1055 Their sweet sun-worship? these be for the snare
(So runs thy fancy), these be for the spit,[5]

[1] How should a scullion know anything of noble life?
[2] perhaps.
[3] thrush.
[4] blackbird.
[5] You only think whether they are suitable for the kitchen or not.

Larding and basting. See thou have not now
Larded thy last, except[1] thou turn and fly.
There stands the third fool of their allegory."

1060 For there beyond a bridge of treble bow,
All in a rose-red from the west, and all
Naked it seem'd, and glowing in the broad
Deep-dimpled current underneath, the knight,
That named himself the Star of Evening, stood.

1065 And Gareth, "Wherefore waits the madman there
Naked in open dayshine?" "Nay," she cried,
"Not naked, only wrapt in hardened skins
That fit him like his own; and so ye cleave
His armor off him, these will turn the blade."

1070 Then the third brother shouted o'er the bridge,
"O brother-star, why shine ye here so low?
Thy ward[2] is higher up: but have ye slain
The damsel's champion?" and the damsel cried,

"No star of thine, but shot from Arthur's heaven
1075 With all disaster unto thine and thee!
For both thy younger brethren have gone down
Before this youth; and so wilt thou, Sir Star;
Art thou not old?"

"Old, damsel, old and hard,
Old, with the might and breath of twenty boys.'
1080 Said Gareth, "Old, and over-bold in brag!
But that same strength which threw the Morning-Star
Can throw the Evening."

Then that other blew
A hard and deadly note upon the horn.

[1] unless. [2] place to guard.

"Approach and arm me!" With slow steps from out
1085 An old storm-beaten, russet, many-stain'd
Pavilion, forth a grizzled damsel came,
And arm'd him in old arms, and brought a helm
With but a drying evergreen for crest,
And gave a shield whereon the Star of Even
1090 Half-tarnish'd and half-bright, his emblem, shone.[1]
But when it glittered over the saddle-bow,
They madly hurl'd together on the bridge,
And Gareth overthrew him, lighted, drew,
There met him drawn, and overthrew him again,
1095 But up like fire he started: and as oft
As Gareth brought him grovelling on his knees,
So many a time he vaulted up again;
Till Gareth panted hard, and his great heart,
Foredooming[2] all his trouble was in vain,
1100 Labor'd within him, for he seem'd as one
That all in later, sadder age begins
To war against ill uses of a life,
But these from all his life arise, and cry,
"Thou hast made us lords, and canst not put us down!"
1105 He half despairs; so Gareth seem'd to strike
Vainly, the damsel clamoring all the while,
"Well done, knave-knight, well-stricken, O good
knight-knave—
O knave, as noble as any of all the knights—
Shame me not, shame me not. I have prophesied—
1110 Strike, thou art worthy of the Table Round—
His arms are old, he trusts the harden'd skin—
Strike—strike—the wind will never change again."[3]
And Gareth hearing ever stronglier smote,
And hew'd great pieces of his armor off him,
1115 But lash'd in vain against the harden'd skin,

[1] Note the difference from the arms of the Morning-Star.

[2] judging beforehand.

[3] See ll. 969, 1028.

And could not wholly bring him under, more
Than loud Southwesterns, rolling ridge on ridge,
The buoy that rides at sea, and dips and springs
Forever; till at length Sir Gareth's brand
1120 Clash'd his, and brake it utterly to the hilt.
"I have thee now;" but forth that other sprang,
And, all unknightlike, writhed his wiry arms
Around him, till he felt, despite his mail,
Strangled, but straining ev'n his uttermost
1125 Cast, and so hurl'd him headlong o'er the bridge
Down to the river, sink or swim, and cried,
"Lead, and I follow."

But the damsel said,
"I lead no longer; ride thou at my side;
Thou art the kingliest of all kitchen-knaves.[1]

1130 "'O trefoil, sparkling on the rainy plain,
O rainbow with three colors after rain,
Shine sweetly: thrice my love hath smiled on me.'[2]

"Sir,—and good faith, I fain had added—knight,
But that I heard thee call thyself a knave,—
1135 Shamed am I that I so rebuked, reviled,
Missaid thee; noble I am; and thought the King
Scorn'd me and mine; and now thy pardon, friend,
For thou hast ever answer'd courteously,
And wholly bold thou art, and meek withal
1140 As any of Arthur's best, but, being knave,
Hast mazed my wit: I marvel what thou art."

"Damsel," he said, "ye be not all to blame,
Saving that ye mistrusted our good King
Would handle scorn, or yield thee, asking, one

[1] scullions.

[2] See l. 976.

1145 Not fit to cope thy quest.[1] Ye said your say;
Mine answer was my deed. Good sooth! I hold
He scarce is knight, yea but half-man, nor meet
To fight for gentle damsel, he, who lets
His heart be stirr'd with any foolish heat
1150 At any gentle damsel's waywardness.
Shamed? care not! thy foul sayings fought for me:
And seeing now my words are fair, methinks,
There rides no knight, not Lancelot, his great self,[2]
Hath force to quell me."

Nigh upon that hour
1155 When the lone hern forgets his melancholy,
Lets down his other leg, and stretching dreams
Of goodly supper in the distant pool,
Then turn'd the noble damsel smiling at him,
And told him of a cavern hard at hand,
1160 Where bread and baken meats and good red wine
Of Southland, which the Lady Lyonors
Had sent her coming champion, waited him.

Anon they past a narrow comb[3] wherein
Were slabs of rock with figures, knights on horse
1165 Sculptured, and deckt in slowly-waning hues.
"Sir Knave, my knight, a hermit once was here,
Whose holy hand hath fashion'd on the rock
The war of Time against the soul of man.
And yon four fools have suck'd their allegory
1170 From these damp walls, and taken but the form.[4]
Know ye not these?" and Gareth lookt and read—
In letters like to those the vexillary

[1] to accomplish your adventure.

[2] Lancelot was the most powerful of the Knights of the Round Table.

[3] A *comb* is a hollow in a hillside.

[4] The allegory as inscribed on the rock had a meaning. The brothers took but the names and forms, having no conception of the thought at bottom.

Hath left crag-carven o'er the streaming Gelt[1]—
"PHOSPHORUS," then "MERIDIES"—"HESPERUS"—
1175 "NOX"—"MORS,[2]" beneath five figures, armed men,
Slab after slab, their faces forward all,
And running down the Soul, a Shape that fled
With broken wings, torn raiment and loose hair,
For help and shelter to the hermit's cave.[3]
1180 "Follow the faces, and we find it. Look,
Who comes behind?"

For one—delay'd at first
Thro' helping back the dislocated Kay
To Camelot, then by what thereafter chanced,
The damsel's headlong error[4] thro' the wood—
1185 Sir Lancelot having swum the river-loops—
His blue shield-lions cover'd—softly drew
Behind the twain, and when he saw the star[5]
Gleam, on Sir Gareth's turning to him, cried,
"Stay, felon knight, I avenge me for my friend."
1190 And Gareth crying prick'd against the cry;
But when they closed—in a moment—at one touch
Of that skill'd spear, the wonder of the world—
Went sliding down so easily, and fell,
That when he found the grass within his hands
1195 He laugh'd; the laughter jarr'd upon Lynette:
Harshly she ask'd him, "Shamed and overthrown,
And tumbled back into the kitchen-knave,
Why laugh ye? that ye blew your boast in vain?"

[1] There are Roman inscriptions cut in a rock above the Gelt, a small stream in Cumberland. One of them has mention of a *vexillatio*, or detachment of one of the old Roman legions. The *vexillary* would have been a soldier in such a detachment.

[2] These are Latin names for "Morning Star," "Midday," "Evening Star," "Night," "Death."

[3] The hermit's idea emphasized the struggle of the soul in the world. The soul, pursued by Youth, Middle Age, Old Age, and Death, seeks refuge in Religion.

[4] wandering from the path.

[5] Lancelot, on seeing the shield of the Morning-Star, thought Gareth had been overcome. A knight was known by his shield.

"Nay, noble damsel, but that I, the son
1200 Of old King Lot and good Queen Bellicent,
And victor of the bridges and the ford,
And knight of Arthur, here lie thrown by whom
I know not, all thro' mere unhappiness—
Device and sorcery and unhappiness—
1205 Out, sword; we are thrown!" and Lancelot answer'd, "Prince,
O Gareth—thro' the mere unhappiness
Of one who came to help thee not to harm,
Lancelot, and all as glad to find thee whole,
As on the day when Arthur knighted him."

1210 Then Gareth, "Thou—Lancelot!—thine the hand
That threw me? And some chance to mar the boast
Thy brethren of thee make—which could not chance—
Had sent thee down before a lesser spear
Shamed had I been and sad—O Lancelot—thou!"

1215 Whereat the maiden, petulant, "Lancelot,
Why came ye not, when call'd? and wherefore now
Come ye, not call'd? I gloried in my knave,
Who being still[1] rebuked, would answer still
Courteous as any knight—but now, if knight,
1220 The marvel dies, and leaves me fool'd and trick'd,
And only wondering wherefore play'd upon:
And doubtful whether I and mine be scorn'd.
Where should be truth if not in Arthur's hall,[2]
In Arthur's presence? Knight, knave, prince and fool,
1225 I hate thee and forever."

And Lancelot said,
"Blessed be thou, Sir Gareth! knight art thou

[1] continually.
[2] Yet even in the court of Arthur, Gareth had appeared deceitfully. See l. 291.

To the King's best wish. O damsel, be ye wise
To call him shamed, who is but overthrown?
Thrown have I been, nor once, but many a time.
1230 Victor from vanquish'd issues at the last,
And overthrower from being overthrown.
With sword we have not striven;[1] and thy good horse
And thou art weary; yet not less I felt
Thy manhood thro' that wearied lance of thine.
1235 Well hast thou done: for all the stream is freed,
And thou hast wreak'd his justice on his foes,
And when reviled, hast answer'd graciously,
And makest merry, when overthrown. Prince, Knight,
Hail, Knight and Prince, and of our Table Round!"

1240 And then when turning to Lynette he told
The tale of Gareth, petulantly she said,
"Ay well—ay well—for worse than being fool'd
Of others, is to fool one's self. A cave,
Sir Lancelot, is hard by, with meats and drinks
1245 And forage for the horse, and flint for fire.
But all about it flies a honeysuckle.
Seek, till we find." And when they sought and found,
Sir Gareth drank and ate, and all his life
Past into sleep; on whom the maiden gaz'd.
1250 "Sound sleep be thine! sound cause to sleep hast thou.
Wake lusty! Seem I not as tender to him
As any mother? Ay, but such a one
As all day long hath rated at her child,
And vext his day, but blesses him asleep—
1255 Good lord, how sweetly smells the honeysuckle
In the hush'd night, as if the world were one
Of utter peace, and love, and gentleness!
O Lancelot, Lancelot"—and she clapt her hands—

[1] The meeting on horseback, lance in rest, was generally followed by combat with sword on foot.

"Full merry am I to find my goodly knave
1260 Is knight and noble. See now, sworn have I,
Else yon black felon had not let me pass,[1]
To bring thee back to do the battle with him.
Thus an thou goest, he will fight thee first:
Who doubts thee victor? so will my knight-knave
1265 Miss the full flower of this accomplishment."[2]

Said Lancelot, "Peradventure he you name,
May know my shield. Let Gareth, an he will,
Change his for mine, and take my charger, fresh,
Not to be spurr'd, loving the battle as well
1270 As he that rides him." "Lancelot-like," she said,
"Courteous in this, Lord Lancelot, as in all."

And Gareth, wakening, fiercely clutch'd the shield;
"Ramp, ye lance-splintering lions,[3] on whom all spears
Are rotten sticks! ye seem agape to roar!
1275 Yea, ramp and roar at leaving of your lord!—
Care not, good beasts, so well I care for you.
O noble Lancelot, from my hold on these
Streams virtue—fire—thro' one that will not shame
Even the shadow of Lancelot under shield.
1280 Hence let us go."

Silent the silent field
They traversed. Arthur's harp[4] tho' summer-wan,
In counter-motion[5] to the clouds, allured
The glance of Gareth dreaming on his liege.
A star shot: "Lo," said Gareth, "the foe falls!"
1285 An owl whoopt: "Hark the victor pealing there!"

[1] See ll. 604, 605.

[2] deed accomplished.

[3] on Lancelot's shield.

[4] "Arthur's Harp" was the name of a constellation or of a star. It is pale in summer because in summer the nights are not so dark as in winter, so that the stars seem less bright.

[5] The clouds passing over the star made it seem as though it were going in the contrary direction. *Counter-motion* means motion the other way.

Suddenly she that rode upon his left
Clung to the shield that Lancelot lent him crying,
"Yield, yield him this again: 'tis he must fight:[1]
I curse the tongue that all thro' yesterday
1290 Reviled thee, and hath wrought on Lancelot now
To lend thee horse and shield: wonders ye have done;
Miracles ye cannot: here is glory enow
In having flung the three: I see thee maim'd,
Mangled: I swear thou canst not fling the fourth."

1295 "And wherefore, damsel? tell me all ye know.
Ye cannot scare me; nor rough face, or voice,
Brute bulk of limb, or boundless savagery
Appall me from the quest."

"Nay, Prince," she cried,
"God wot, I never look'd upon the face,
1300 Seeing he never rides abroad by day;
But watch'd him have I like a phantom pass
Chilling the night: nor have I heard the voice.
Always he made his mouthpiece of a page
Who came and went, and still reported him
1305 As closing in himself the strength of ten,
And when his anger tare him, massacring
Man, woman, lad and girl—yea, the soft babe—
Some hold that he hath swallow'd infant flesh,
Monster! O Prince, I went for Lancelot first,
1310 The quest is Lancelot's: give him back the shield."

Said Gareth laughing, "An he fight for this,
Belike he wins it as the better man:
Thus—and not else?"

But Lancelot on him urged
All the devisings of their chivalry

[1] Lynette was seized with sudden fear; she had wished that Gareth should have all the honor; now she fears the danger so much that she wishes Lancelot to take the adventure.

1315 Where one might meet a mightier than himself;
How best to manage horse, lance, sword and shield,
And so fill up the gap where force might fail
With skill and fineness.[1] Instant[2] were his words.

Then Gareth, "Here be rules. I know but one—
1320 To dash against mine enemy and to win.
Yet have I watch'd thee victor in the joust,
And seen thy way."[3] "Heaven help thee," sigh'd Lynette.

Then for a space, and under cloud that grew
To thunder-gloom palling all stars, they rode
1325 In converse till she made her palfrey halt,
Lifted an arm, and softly whisper'd, "There."
And all the three were silent seeing, pitch'd
Beside the Castle Perilous on flat field,
A huge pavilion like a mountain peak
1330 Sunder the glooming crimson on the marge,
Black, with black banner, and a long black horn
Beside it hanging; which Sir Gareth graspt,
And so, before the two could hinder him,
Sent all his heart and breath thro' all the horn.
1335 Echo'd the walls; a light twinkled; anon
Came lights and lights, and once again he blew;
Whereon were hollow tramplings up and down
And muffled voices heard, and shadows past;
Till high above him, circled with her maids,
1340 The Lady Lyonors at a window stood,
Beautiful among lights, and waving to him
White hands, and courtesy; but when the Prince
Three times had blown—after long hush—at last—
The huge pavilion slowly yielded up,

[1] delicacy.
[2] pressing.
[3] In spite of his headlong dash, Gareth had noticed Lancelot carefully.

1345 Thro' those black foldings, that which housed [1] therein.
High on a nightblack horse, in nightblack arms,
With white breast-bone, and barren ribs of Death,
And crown'd with fleshless laughter—some ten steps—
In the half light—through the dim dawn—advanced
1350 The monster, and then paused, and spake no word.

But Gareth spake and all indignantly.
"Fool, for thou hast, men say, the strength of ten,
Canst thou not trust the limbs thy God hath given,
But must, to make the terror of thee more,
1355 Trick thyself out in ghastly imageries
Of that which Life hath done with, and the clod,
Less dull than thou, will hide with mantling flowers
As if for pity?" [2] But he spake no word;
Which set the horror higher: a maiden swoon'd;
1360 The Lady Lyonors wrung her hands and wept,
As doom'd to be the bride of Night and Death;
Sir Gareth's head prickled beneath his helm;
And ev'n Sir Lancelot thro' his warm blood felt
Ice strike, and all that mark'd him were aghast.

1365 At once Sir Lancelot's charger fiercely neigh'd—
At once the black horse bounded forward with him.
Then those that did not blink the terror, saw
That Death was cast to ground, and slowly rose.
But with one stroke Sir Gareth split the skull.
1370 Half fell to right and half to left and lay.
Then with a stronger buffet he cleft the helm
As throughly [3] as the skull; and out from this
Issued the bright face of a blooming boy
Fresh as a flower new-born, and crying, "Knight,
1375 Slay me not: my three brethren bade me do it,

[1] dwelt.
[2] Even the earth hides the dead with flowers rather than with signs of mourning
[3] entirely.

To make a horror all about the house,
And stay the world from Lady Lyonors.
They never dream'd the passes would be past."
Answer'd Sir Gareth graciously to one
1380 Not many a moon his younger, "My fair child,
What madness made thee challenge the chief knight
Of Arthur's hall?" "Fair Sir, they bade me do it.
They hate the King, and Lancelot, the King's friend,
They hoped to slay him somewhere on the stream,
1385 They never dream'd the passes could be past."

Then sprang the happier day from under-ground;
And Lady Lyonors and her house, with dance
And revel and song, made merry over Death,
As being after all their foolish fears
1390 And horrors only prov'n a blooming boy.
So large mirth lived, and Gareth won the quest.

And he that told the tale in older times
Says that Sir Gareth wedded Lyonors,
But he, that told it later, says Lynette.[1]

[1] "He that told the tale in older times" is Malory (p. 9). But Tennyson feels that Gareth had really fought for Lynette, and that it is Lynette whom he should win.

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM.

AN EPISODE.

AND the first gray of morning filled the east,
And the fog rose out of the Oxus[1] stream.
But all the Tartar[2] camp along the stream
Was hushed, and still the men were plunged in sleep;
5 Sohrab alone, he slept not; all night long
He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed;
But when the gray dawn stole into his tent,
He rose, and clad himself, and girt his sword,
And took his horseman's cloak, and left his tent,
10 And went abroad into the cold wet fog,
Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's[3] tent.
Through the black Tartar tents he passed, which stood
Clustering like beehives on the low flat strand
Of Oxus, where the summer-floods o'erflow
15 When the sun melts the snows in high Pamere;
Through the black tents he passed, o'er that low strand,
And to a hillock came, a little back
From the stream's brink—the spot where first a boat,
Crossing the stream in summer,[4] scrapes the land.
20 The men of former times had crowned the top
With a clay fort; but that was fall'n, and now
The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,
A dome[5] of laths, and o'er it felts were spread.
And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood
25 Upon the thick piled carpets in the tent,

[1] a river rising in the western Himalayas. It flows from the plateau called Pamere (l. 15) or Pamir, north of Afghanistan, toward the west and north into the Aral Sea.

[2] The Tartars include, loosely speaking, numbers of half-civilized tribes of Central Asia. In ll. 117–135 the poet mentions a number of the tribes.

[3] Peran-Wisa, the chief of the Tartar army.

[4] when the river was flooded.

[5] It was rather larger than the other tents.

A[illegible]ound the old man sleeping on his bed
O[illegible]gs and felts, and near him lay his arms.
And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step
Was dulled; for he slept light, an old man's sleep;
30 And he rose quickly on one arm, and said:—
"Who art thou? for it is not yet clear dawn.
Speak! is there news, or any night alarm?"
But Sohrab came to the bedside, and said:
"Thou know'st me, Peran-Wisa! it is I.
35 The sun is not yet risen, and the foe
Sleep; but I sleep not; all night long I lie
Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.
For so did King Afrasiab[1] bid me seek
Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,
40 In Samarcand,[2] before the army marched;
And I will tell thee what my heart desires.
Thou know'st if, since from Ader-baijan[3] first
I came among the Tartars and bore arms,
I have still[4] served Afrasiab well, and shown,
45 At my boy's years, the courage of a man.
This too thou know'st, that while I still bear on
The conquering Tartar ensigns through the world,
And beat the Persians[5] back on every field,
I seek one man, one man, and one alone—
50 Rustum,[6] my father; who I hoped should greet,
Should one day greet, upon some well-fought field,
His not unworthy, not inglorious son.
So I long hoped, but him I never find.
Come then, hear now, and grant me what I ask.
55 Let the two armies rest to-day; but I

[1] the ruler, for the time being, of all the Tartar tribes that would submit to him.

[2] Samarcand, in what is now Turkestan, north of Afghanistan.

[3] in the northern part of Persia.

[4] continually.

[5] This tale is an episode in the national epic of Persia (see p. 11), of which a great part consists of a poetical account of the struggles of the Persians with the Turanian (or Tartar) invaders.

[6] Rustum, the great legendary hero of Persia, a champion of unconquerable might and power.

Will challenge forth the bravest Persian lords
To meet me, man to man; if I prevail,
Rustum will surely hear it; if I fall—
Old man, the dead need no one, claim no kin.
60 Dim is the rumor of a common[1] fight,
Where host meets host, and many names are sunk;
But of a single combat fame speaks clear."
He spoke; and Peran-Wisa took the hand
Of the young man in his, and sighed, and said:
65 "O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine:
Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,
And share the battle's common chance with us
Who love thee, but must press forever first,
In single fight incurring single risk,
70 To find a father thou hast never seen?
That were far best, my son, to stay with us
Unmurmuring; in our tents, while it is war,
And when 'tis truce,[2] then in Afrasiab's towns.
But, if this one desire indeed rules all,
75 To seek out Rustum—seek him not through fight!
Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,
O Sohrab! carry an unwounded son!
But far hence seek him, for he is not here.[3]
For now it is not as when I was young,
80 When Rustum was in front of every fray;
But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,
In Seistan,[4] with Zal, his father old.
Whether that his own mighty strength at last
Feels the abhorred approaches of old age,
85 Or in some quarrel with the Persian King.[5]
There go!—thou wilt not? Yet my heart forebodes
Danger or death awaits thee on this field.
Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost

[1] a fight in which everybody is engaged.
[2] a short peace.
[3] See ll. 221 ff.
[4] Seistan was a province of Afghanistan.
[5] See l. 226.

To us; fain therefore send thee hence, in peace
90 To seek thy father, not seek single fights
In vain;—but[1] who can keep the lion's cub
From ravening, and who govern Rustum's son?
Go, I will grant thee what thy heart desires."
So said he, and dropped Sohrab's hand, and left
95 His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay;
And o'er his chilly limbs his woolen coat
He passed, and tied his sandals on his feet,
And threw a white cloak round him, and he took
In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword;
100 And on his head he set his sheepskin cap,
Black, glossy, curled, the fleece of Kara-Kul;[2]
And raised the curtain of his tent, and called
His herald to his side, and went abroad.
The sun by this had risen, and cleared the fog
105 From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands.
And from their tents the Tartar horsemen filed
Into the open plain; so Haman bade—
Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa ruled
The host, and still was in his lusty prime.
110 From their black tents, long files of horse, they streamed;
As when some gray November morn the files,
In marching order spread, of long-necked cranes
Stream over Casbin[3] and the southern slopes
Of Elburz,[4] from the Aralian[5] estuaries,
115 Or some frore[6] Caspian[5] reed-bed, southward bound
For the warm Persian seaboard—so they streamed.
The Tartars of the Oxus,[7] the King's guard,

[1] The dash indicates a break in the construction. Peran-Wisa sees the hopelessness of what he is saying, and stops short.

[2] Kara-Kul is in Bokhara. This passage is rather characteristic of Arnold's style (p. 31), but the detail is carried to an excess that is almost prosaic.

[3] a city of Persia.

[4] a chain of mountains running south of the present northern boundary of Persia.

[5] The Caspian and the Aral Sea are both north of Persia. The cranes were migrating southward for the winter.

[6] frozen.

[7] In the following passage Arnold uses geographical names with a view of giving a

First, with black sheepskin caps and with long spears;
Large men, large steeds; who from Bokhara come
120 And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares.
Next, the more temperate Toorkmuns of the south,
The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,
And those from Attruck and the Caspian sands;
Light men and on light steeds, who only drink
125 The acrid milk of camels, and their wells.
And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came
From far, and a more doubtful service owned;
The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks
Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards
130 And close-set skull caps; and those wilder hordes
Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern waste,
Kalmucks and unkempt Kuzzaks, tribes who stray
Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,
Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere;
135 These all filed out from camp into the plain.
And on the other side the Persians formed;—
First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seemed,
The Ilyats[1] of Khorassan,[2] and behind,
The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,
140 Marshaled battalions bright in burnished steel.[3]
But Peran-Wisa with his herald came,
Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,
And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks.

general effect of variety and greatness. It is not necessary to know the exact whereabouts of each place, nor would it be easy to tell without a map. Most of the places and people mentioned will be found on any good modern map of Persia, Afghanistan, and Turkestan. The Oxus is now called the Amu Daria. Khiva and Bokhara will be easily found. The Toorkmans are more commonly called Turcomans. The Attruck empties into the Caspian. The Jaxartes, now called the Sir Daria, empties into the Aral Sea. Ferghana is a part of Turkestan. Kalmuck is a very general name, as also Kuzzak, or, as more commonly spelled, Cossacks. The Kirghizzes are of Mongolian stock, coming from further east than the rest.

[1] tribes.

[2] an eastern province of Persia.

[3] The Persians were a more civilized people than the Tartars, and had attained a greater military discipline, although they lacked the wild fierceness and courage of the Tartar host: see also line 192 and the note on it.

And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw
145 That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back.
He took his spear, and to the front he came,
And checked his ranks, and fixed them where they stood.
And the old Tartar came upon the sand
Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said:
150 "Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear!
Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.
But choose a champion from the Persian lords
To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man."
As, in the country, on a morn in June,
155 When the dew glistens on the pearled ears,
A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy—
So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,
A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran
Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they loved.
160 But as a troop of peddlers, from Cabool,[1]
Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,[2]
That vast sky-neighboring mountain of milk snow;
Crossing so high, that, as they mount, they pass
Long flocks of traveling birds dead on the snow,
165 Choked by the air,[3] and scarce can they themselves
Slake their parched throats with sugared mulberries—
In single file they move, and stop their breath,
For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging snows—
So the pale Persians held their breath with fear.
170 And to Ferood his brother chiefs came up
To counsel; Gudurz and Zoarrah came,
And Feraburz, who ruled the Persian host
Second, and was the uncle of the King;
These came and counseled, and then Gudurz said:
175 "Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge up,

[1] the capital of Afghanistan.

[2] the Hindoo Koosh Mountains.

[3] The higher one goes the more rarefied becomes the air, until upon great heights it is almost impossible to breathe it. These birds had flown so high in trying to get over the great mountains, that they had risen to where the air was unbreathable.

Yet champion have we none to match this youth.
He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.
But Rustum came last night; aloof he sits
And sullen, and has pitched his tents apart.
180 Him will I seek, and carry to his ear
The Tartar challenge and this young man's name.
Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.
Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up."
So spake he; and Ferood stood forth and cried:
185 "Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said!
Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man."
He spake: and Peran-Wisa turned, and strode
Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.
But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,
190 And crossed the camp which lay behind, and reached,
Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.
Of scarlet cloth [1] they were, and glittering gay,
Just pitched; the high pavilion in the midst
Was Rustum's, and his men lay camped around.
195 And Gudurz entered Rustum's tent, and found
Rustum; his morning meal was done, but still
The table stood before him, charged with food—
A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,
And dark-green melons; and there Rustum sate
200 Listless, and held a falcon [2] on his wrist,
And played with it; but Gudurz came and stood
Before him; and he looked, and saw him stand,
And with a cry sprang up and dropped the bird,
And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said:
205 "Welcome! these eyes could see no better sight.
What news? but sit down first, and eat and drink."
But Gudurz stood in the tent-door, and said:

[1] Note the greater luxury among the Persians than among the Tartars.

[2] The sport of falconry, or the hunting of birds with trained falcons, has been prevalent in the East from most ancient times.

"Not now! a time will come to eat and drink,
But not to-day; to-day has other needs.
210 The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze;
For from the Tartars is a challenge brought
To pick a champion from the Persian lords
To fight their champion—and thou know'st his name—
Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid.[1]
215 O Rustum, like thy might is this young man's!
He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart;
And he is young, and Iran's[2] chiefs are old,
Or else too weak; and all eyes turned to thee.
Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose!"
He spoke; but Rustum answered with a smile:
220 "Go to! if Iran's chiefs are old, then I
Am older; if the young are weak, the King
Errs strangely; for the King, for Kai Khosroo,[3]
Himself is young, and honors younger men,
225 And lets the aged molder in their graves.
Rustum he loves no more, but loves the young—
The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts, not I.
For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's fame?
For would that I myself had such a son,[4]
230 And not that one slight helpless girl[5] I have—
A son so famed, so brave, to send to war,
And I to tarry with the snow-haired Zal,[6]
My father, whom the robber Afghans[7] vex
And clip his borders short, and drive his herds,
235 And he has none to guard his weak old age.
There would I go, and hang my armor up,
And with my great name fence that weak old man,

[1] This was, of course, the reason for all the evil that followed.

[2] Iran, the Persian name for Persia.

[3] Cyrus the Great.

[4] This is the poet's irony.

[5] See p. 11.

[6] Zal, the father of Rustum, had been born with snow-white hair. This was considered unpropitious, and the child was exposed on the mountains. He was found and brought up, however, by the Simurgh, a wonderful griffin. See ll. 679-682.

[7] Seistan, where Zal then lived, is now a part of Afghanistan.

And spend the goodly treasures I have got,
And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,
240 And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings,
And with these slaughterous hands draw sword no more."
He spoke, and smiled; and Gudurz made reply:
"What then, O Rustum, will men say to this,
When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks
245 Thee most of all, and thou, whom most he seeks,
Hidest thy face? Take heed lest men should say:
'Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his fame,
And shuns to peril it with younger men.'"
And, greatly moved, then Rustum made reply:
250 "O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words?
Thou knowest better words than this to say.
What is one more, one less, obscure or famed,
Valiant or craven, young or old, to me?
Are not they mortal, am not I myself?
255 But who for men of naught would do great deeds?
Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame!
But I will fight unknown, and in plain arms;
Let not men say of Rustum, he was matched
In single fight with any mortal man."
260 He spoke, and frowned; and Gudurz turned, and ran
Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy—
Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.
But Rustum strode to his tent door, and called
His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,
265 And clad himself in steel; the arms he chose
Were plain, and on his shield was no device,
Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,
And, from the fluted spine atop, a plume
Of horsehair waved, a scarlet horsehair plume.
270 So armed, he issued forth; and Ruksh,[1] his horse,

[1] In legends of chivalry the horse and the sword of the hero are well-nigh as famous as himself.

Followed him like a faithful hound at heel—
Ruksh, whose renown was noised through all the earth,
The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once
Did in Bokhara by the river find
275 A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home,
And reared him; a bright bay, with lofty crest,
Dight[1] with a saddlecloth of broidered green
Crusted with gold, and on the ground were worked
All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know.
280 So followed, Rustum left his tents, and crossed
The camp, and to the Persian host appeared.
And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts
Hailed; but the Tartars knew not who he was.
And dear as the wet diver to the eyes
285 Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,
By sandy Bahrein,[2] in the Persian Gulf,
Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,
Having made up his tale[3] of precious pearls,
Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands—
290 So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came.
And Rustum to the Persian front advanced,
And Sohrab armed in Haman's tent, and came.
And as afield the reapers cut a swath
Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,
295 And on each side are squares of standing corn,
And in the midst a stubble, short and bare—
So on each side were squares of men, with spears
Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand.
And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast
300 His eyes toward the Tartar tents, and saw
Sohrab come forth, and eyed him as he came.
As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,
Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge
Who with numb blackened fingers makes her fire—

[1] clothed, caparisoned. [2] an island famous for its pearl-diving. [3] the required amount.

305 At cockcrow, on a starlit winter's morn,
When the frost flowers the whitened window-panes[1]—
And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts
Of that poor drudge may be; so Rustum eyed
The unknown adventurous Youth, who from afar
310 Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth
All the most valiant chiefs; long he perused[2]
His spirited air, and wondered who he was.
For very young he seemed, tenderly reared;
Like some young cypress, tall, and dark, and straight,
315 Which in a queen's secluded garden throws
Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,
By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound-
So slender Sohrab seemed, so softly reared.
And a deep pity entered Rustum's soul
320 As he beheld him coming; and he stood,
And beckoned to him with his hand, and said:
"O thou young man, the air of heaven is soft,
And warm, and pleasant; but the grave is cold!
Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.
325 Behold me! I am vast, and clad in iron,
And tried;[3] and I have stood on many a field
Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe—
Never was that field lost, or that foe saved.
O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death?
330 Be governed! quit the Tartar host, and come
To Iran, and be as my son[4] to me,
And fight beneath my banner till I die!
There are no youths in Iran brave as thou."
So he spake, mildly; Sohrab heard his voice,
335 The mighty voice of Rustum, and he saw

[1] This simile, so obviously drawn from modern life, hardly seems so much in keeping with the general tone of the poem as do others.

[2] examined carefully.

[3] experienced, proved.

[4] Here again the irony of the poet, and here, as later in l. 447, the evil outcome hangs in the balance. But Fate is determined: see l. 709.

His giant figure planted on the sand,
Sole, like some single tower, which a chief
Hath builded on the waste in former years
Against the robbers; and he saw that head,
340 Streaked with its first gray hairs;—hope filled his soul,
And he ran forward and embraced his knees,
And clasped his hand within his own, and said:
"Oh, by thy father's head! by thine own soul!
Art thou not Rustum? speak! art thou not he?"
345 But Rustum eyed askance the kneeling youth,
And turned away, and spake to his own soul:
"Ah me, I muse what this young fox may mean!
False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys.
For if I now confess this thing he asks,
350 And hide it not, but say: 'Rustum is here!'
He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,
But he will find some pretext not to fight,
And praise my fame, and proffer courteous gifts,
A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.
355 And on a feast-tide, in Afrasiab's hall,
In Samarcand, he will arise and cry:
'I challenged once, when the two armies camped
Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords
To cope with me in single fight; but they
360 Shrank, only Rustum dared; then he and I
Changed gifts, and went on equal terms away.'
So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud;
Then were the chiefs of Iran shamed through me."
And then he turned, and sternly spake aloud:
365 "Rise! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus
Of Rustum? I am here, whom thou hast called
By challenge forth; make good thy vaunt, or yield!
Is it with Rustum only thou wouldst fight?
Rash boy, men look on Rustum's face and flee!
370 For well I know, that did great Rustum stand

Before thy face this day, and were revealed,
There would be then no talk of fighting more.
But being what I am, I tell thee this—
Do thou record it in thine inmost soul:
375 Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt and yield,
Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till winds
Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer floods,
Oxus in summer wash them all away."
He spoke; and Sohrab answered, on his feet:
380 "Art thou so fierce? Thou wilt not fright me so!
I am no girl; to be made pale by words.
Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum stand
Here on this field, there were no fighting then.
But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here.
385 Begin! thou art more vast, more dread than I,
And thou art proved, I know, and I am young.
But yet success sways[1] with the breath of heaven.
And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure
Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know.
390 For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,
Poised on the top of a huge wave of fate,[2]
Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.
And whether it will heave us up to land,
Or whether it will roll us out to sea,
395 Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,
We know not, and no search will make us know;
Only the event[3] will teach us in its hour."
He spoke, and Rustum answered not, but hurled
His spear; down from the shoulder, down it came,
400 As on some partridge in the corn a hawk,
That long has towered in the airy clouds,
Drops like a plummet; Sohrab saw it come,
And sprang aside, quick as a flash; the spear

[1] Success goes this way and that, as heaven directs.

[2] We have here the only long metaphor in the poem.

[3] the outcome.

Hissed, and went quivering down into the sand,
405 Which it sent flying wide;—then Sohrab threw
In turn, and full struck Rustum's shield; sharp rang,
The iron plates rang sharp, but turned the spear.
And Rustum seized his club, which none but he
Could wield; an unlopped[1] trunk it was, and huge,
410 Still rough—like those which men in treeless plains
To build them boats fish from the flooded rivers,
Hyphasis or Hydaspes,[2] when, high up
By their dark springs, the wind in winter time
Hath made in Himalayan forests wrack,[3]
415 And strewn the channels with torn boughs—so huge
The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck
One stroke; but again Sohrab sprang aside,
Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club came
Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum's hand.
420 And Rustum followed his own blow, and fell
To his knees, and with his fingers clutched the sand;
And now might Sohrab have unsheathed his sword,
And pierced the mighty Rustum while he lay
Dizzy, and on his knees, and choked with sand;
425 But he looked on, and smiled, nor bared his sword,
But courteously drew back, and spoke, and said:
"Thou strik'st too hard! that club of thine will float
Upon the summer floods, and not my bones.
But rise, and be not wroth! not wroth am I;
430 No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul.
Thou say'st, thou art not Rustum; be it so!
Who art thou then, that canst so touch my soul?
Boy as I am, I have seen battles too—
Have waded foremost in their bloody waves,
435 And heard their hollow roar of dying men;
But never was my heart thus touched before.

[1] with all the branches on.
[2] rivers in northern India, running into the Indus; the modern names are Jhelum and Beas.
[3] the same as *wreck*, *ruin*.

Are they from Heaven, these softenings of the heart?
O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven!
Come, plant we here in earth our angry spears,
440 And make a truce, and sit upon this sand,
And pledge each other in red wine, like friends,
And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's deeds.
There are enough foes in the Persian host,
Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no pang;
445 Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou
Mayst fight; fight *them*, when they confront thy spear!
But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and me!"[1]

He ceased, but while he spake, Rustum had risen,
And stood erect, trembling with rage; his club
450 He left to lie, but had regained his spear,
Whose fiery point now in his mailed right hand
Blazed bright and baleful, like that autumn star,[2]
The baleful sign of fevers; dust had soiled
His stately crest, and dimmed his glittering arms.
455 His breast heaved, his lips foamed, and twice his voice
Was choked with rage; at last these words broke way:
"Girl! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands!
Curled minion,[3] dancer, coiner[4] of sweet words!
Fight, let me hear thy hateful voice no more!
460 Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now
With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to dance;
But on the Oxus sands, and in the dance
Of battle, and with me, who make no play
Of war; I fight it out, and hand to hand.
465 Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine!
Remember all thy valor; try thy feints[5]
And cunning! all the pity I had is gone;
Because thou hast shamed me before both the hosts

[1] See note on l. 331.
[2] the Dog-star.
[3] a favorite, a darling. [4] a phrase-maker.
[5] a pretended stroke, made to get one's adversary to leave himself unprotected in trying to guard.

With thy light skipping tricks, and thy girl's wiles."
470 He spoke, and Sohrab kindled at his taunts,
And he too drew his sword; at once they rushed
Together, as two eagles on one prey
Come rushing down together from the clouds,
One from the east, one from the west; their shields
475 Dashed with a clang together, and a din
Rose, such as that the sinewy wood-cutters
Make often in the forest's heart at morn,
Of hewing axes, crashing trees—such blows
Rustum and Sohrab on each other hailed.
480 And you would say that sun and stars took part
In that unnatural[1] conflict; for a cloud
Grew suddenly in heaven, and darked the sun
Over the fighters' heads; and a wind rose
Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain,
485 And in a sandy whirlwind wrapped the pair.
In gloom they twain were wrapped, and they alone;
For both the on-looking hosts on either hand
Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was pure,
And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.
490 But in the gloom they fought, with bloodshot eyes
And laboring breath; first Rustum struck the shield
Which Sohrab held stiff out; the steel-spiked spear
Rent the tough plates, but failed to reach the skin,
And Rustum plucked it back with angry groan.
495 Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's helm,
Nor clove its steel quite through; but all the crest
He shore away, and that proud horsehair plume,
Never till now defiled, sank to the dust;
And Rustum bowed his head; but then the gloom
500 Grew blacker, thunder rumbled in the air,
And lightnings rent the cloud; and Ruksh, the horse,
Who stood at hand, uttered a dreadful cry;—

[1] between father and son.

No horse's cry was that, most like the roar
Of some pained desert lion, who all day
505 Hath trailed the hunter's javelin in his side,
And comes at night to die upon the sand.
The two hosts heard that cry, and quaked for fear,
And Oxus curdled as it crossed his stream.
But Sohrab heard, and quailed not, but rushed on,
510 And struck again; and again Rustum bowed
His head; but this time all the blade, like glass,
Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,
And in the hand the hilt remained alone.
Then Rustum raised his head; his dreadful eyes
515 Glared, and he shook on high his menacing spear,
And shouted: "Rustum!"—Sohrab heard that shout,
And shrank amazed: back he recoiled one step,
And scanned with blinking eyes the advancing form;
And then he stood bewildered, and he dropped
520 His covering shield, and the spear pierced his side.
He reeled, and, staggering back, sank to the ground;
And then the gloom dispersed, and the wind fell,
And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all
The cloud; and the two armies saw the pair;—
525 Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,
And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.[1]
Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum began:
"Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to kill
A Persian lord this day, and strip his corpse,
530 And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent;
Or else that the great Rustum would come down
Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would move
His heart to take a gift, and let thee go;
And then that all the Tartar host would praise
535 Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy fame,

[1] Note the sudden change from the stirring description of the conflict and the calmness of ll. 522–526.

To glad[1] thy father in his weak old age.
Fool, thou art slain, and by an unknown man!
Dearer to the red jackals[2] shalt thou be
Than to thy friends, and to thy father old."
540 And, with a fearless mien, Sohrab replied:
"Unknown thou art; yet thy fierce vaunt is vain.
Thou[3] dost not slay me, proud and boastful man!
No! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart.
For were I matched with ten such men as thee,
545 And I were that which till to-day I was,
They should be lying here, I standing there.
But that belovéd name unnerved my arm—
That name, and something, I confess,[4] in thee,
Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield
550 Fall; and thy spear transfixed an unarmed foe.
And now thou boastest, and insult'st my fate.
But hear thou this, fierce man, tremble to hear:
The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death!
My father, whom I seek through all the world,
555 He shall avenge my death, and punish thee!"
As when some hunter in the spring hath found
A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,
Upon the craggy isle of a hill-lake,
And pierced her with an arrow as she rose,
560 And followed her to find her where she fell
Far off;—anon her mate comes winging back
From hunting, and a great way off descries
His huddling young left sole; at that, he checks
His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps
565 Circles above his eyry, with loud screams
Chiding his mate back to her nest; but she
Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,
In some far stony gorge out of his ken,

[1] gladden.
[2] who prey upon dead bodies.
[3] The accent is upon the first syllable of the line.
[4] See l. 436.

A heap of fluttering feathers—never more
570 Shall the lake glass[1] her, flying over it;
Never the black and dripping precipices
Echo her stormy scream as she sails by—
As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss,
So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood
575 Over his dying son, and knew him not.
But, with a cold, incredulous voice, he said:
"What prate[2] is this of fathers and revenge?
The mighty Rustum never had a son."
And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied:
580 "Ah yes, he had! and that lost son am I.
Surely the news will one day reach his ear,
Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,
Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here;
And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap
585 To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee.
Fierce man, bethink thee, for an only son!
What will that grief, what will that vengeance be?
Oh, could I live till I that grief had seen!
Yet him I pity not so much, but her,
590 My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells
With that old king, her father, who grows gray
With age, and rules over the valiant Koords.
Her most I pity, who no more will see
Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,
595 With spoils and honor, when the war is done.
But a dark rumor will be bruited up,
From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear;
And then will that defenseless woman learn
That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more,
600 But that in battle with a nameless foe,
By the far-distant Oxus, he is slain."
He spoke; and as he ceased, he wept aloud,

[1] reflect. [2] foolish talk.

Thinking of her he left, and his own death.
He spoke; but Rustum listened, plunged in thought.
605 Nor did he yet believe it was his son
Who spoke, although he called back names he knew;
For he had had sure tidings that the babe,
Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,
Had been a puny girl, no boy at all[1]—
610 So that sad mother sent him word, for fear
Rustum should seek the boy, to train in arms.
And so he deemed that either Sohrab took,
By a false boast, the style[2] of Rustum's son;
Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.
615 So deemed he: yet he listened, plunged in thought;
And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide
Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore
At the full moon; tears gathered in his eyes;
For he remembered his own early youth,
620 And all its bounding rapture; as, at dawn,
The shepherd from his mountain lodge descries
A far, bright city, smitten by the sun,
Through many rolling clouds—so Rustum saw
His youth; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom;
625 And that old king, her father, who loved well
His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child
With joy; and all the pleasant life they led,
They three, in that long-distant summer time—
The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt
630 And hound, and morn on those delightful hills
In Ader-baijan. And he saw that youth,
Of age and looks to be his own dear son,
Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,
Like some rich hyacinthe which by the scythe
635 Of an unskillful gardener has been cut,
Mowing the garden grassplots near its bed,

[1] See Introduction, p. 11.

[2] title, name.

And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,
On the mown, dying grass—so Sohrab lay,
Lovely in death, upon the common sand.
640 And Rustum gazed on him with grief, and said:
"O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son
Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have loved!
Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men
Have told thee false—thou art not Rustum's son.
645 For Rustum had no son; one child he had—
But one—a girl; who with her mother now
Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us—
Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war."
But Sohrab answered him in wrath; for now
650 The anguish of the deep-fixed spear grew fierce,
And he desired to draw forth the steel,
And let the blood flow free, and so to die—
But first he would convince his stubborn foe;
And, rising sternly on one arm, he said:
655 "Man, who art thou who dost deny my words?
Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,
And falsehood, while I lived, was far from mine.[1]
I tell thee, pricked upon this arm I bear
The seal which Rustum to my mother gave,
660 That she might prick it on the babe she bore."
He spoke; and all the blood left Rustum's cheeks,
And his knees tottered, and he smote his hand
Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,
That the hard iron corselet clanked aloud;
665 And to his heart he pressed the other hand,
And in a hollow voice he spake, and said:
"Sohrab, that were a proof which could not lie!
If thou show this, then art thou Rustum's son."
Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loosed

[1] I never lied when living; how much more do I now speak the truth when about to die.

670 His belt, and near the shoulder bared his arm,
And showed a sign in faint vermilion points
Pricked; as a cunning workman, in Pekin,
Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase,
An emperor's gift—at early morn he paints,
675 And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp
Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands—
So delicately pricked the sign appeared
On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's seal.
It was that griffin,[1] which of old reared Zal,
680 Rustum's great father, whom they left to die,
A helpless babe, among the mountain rocks;
Him that kind creature found and reared, and loved—
Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.
And Sohrab bared that image on his arm,
685 And himself scanned it long with mournful eyes,
And then he touched it with his hand, and said:
"How say'st thou? Is that sign the proper[2] sign
Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's?"
He spoke; but Rustum gazed, and gazed, and stood
690 Speechless; and then he uttered one sharp cry:
"O boy—thy father!"—and his voice choked there.
And then a dark cloud passed before his eyes,
And his head swam, and he sank down to earth.
But Sohrab crawled to where he lay, and cast
695 His arms about his neck, and kissed his lips,
And with fond faltering fingers stroked his cheeks,
Trying to call him back to life; and life
Came back to Rustum, and he oped his eyes,
And they stood wide with horror; and he seized
700 In both his hands the dust which lay around,
And threw it on his head, and smirched his hair,—
His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms;

[1] See l. 232 and note on the mysterious youth of Zal.

[2] The word originally meant *that particularly belonging to one.*

And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast,
And his sobs choked him; and he clutched his sword,
705 To draw it, and forever let life out.[1]
But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hands,
And with a soothing voice he spake, and said:
"Father, forbear! for I but meet to-day
The doom which at my birth was written down
710 In heaven, and thou art heaven's unconscious hand.
Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,
When first I saw thee; and thy heart spoke too,
I know it! but fate trod those promptings down
Under its iron heel; fate, fate engaged
715 The strife, and hurled me on my father's spear.
But let us speak no more of this! I find
My father; let me feel that I have found!
Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take
My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,
720 And wash them with thy tears, and say: 'My son!'
Quick! quick! for numbered are my sands[2] of life
And swift; for like the lightning to this field
I came, and like the wind I go away—
Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind.
725 But it was writ in heaven that this should be."
So said he, and his voice released the heart
Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth; he cast
His arms round his son's neck, and wept aloud,
And kissed him. And awe fell on both the hosts,
730 When they saw Rustum's grief; and Ruksh, the horse,
With his head bowing to the ground and mane
Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute woe
First to the one then to the other moved
His head, as if inquiring what their grief
735 Might mean; and from his dark, compassionate eyes,

[1] He would have killed himself when he saw what he had done.

[2] The figure comes perhaps from the running out of the hour-glass.

The big warm tears rolled down, and caked the sand.
But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said:
"Ruksh, now thou grievest; but, O Ruksh, thy feet
Should then have rotted on their nimble joints,
740 When first they brought thy master to this field!"
But Sohrab looked upon the horse, and said:
"Is this, then, Ruksh? How often, in past days,
My mother told me of thee, thou brave steed,
My terrible father's terrible horse! and said,
745 That I should one day find thy lord and thee.
Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane!
O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I;
For thou hast gone where I shall never go,
And snuffed the breezes of my father's home.
750 And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,
And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake[1]
Of Zirrah; and the aged Zal himself
Has often stroked thy neck, and given thee food,
Corn in a golden platter soaked with wine,
755 And said: 'O Ruksh! bear Rustum well,'—but I
Have never known my grandsire's furrowed face,
Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,
Nor slaked my thirst at the clear Helmund stream;
But lodged among my father's foes, and seen
760 Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand,
Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,
And the black Toorkmun tents; and only drunk
The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,
Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,
765 The northern Sir;[2] and this great Oxus stream,
The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die."
Then, with a heavy groan, Rustum bewailed:

[1] The places here mentioned are mostly in Afghanistan and Turkestan, and are sufficiently explained in the poem.

[2] the Jaxartes, or, as now called, the Syr-Daria, which runs into the Aral Sea, to the north of the Oxus.

"Oh, that its waves were flowing over me!
Oh, that I saw its grains of yellow silt[1]
770 Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head!"
But, with a grave mild voice, Sohrab replied:
"Desire not that, my father! thou must live.[2]
For some are born to do great deeds, and live,
As some are born to be obscured, and die.
775 Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,
And reap a second glory in thine age;
Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.
But come! thou seest this great host of men
Which follow me; I pray thee, slay not these!
780 Let me entreat for them; what have they done?
They followed me, my hope, my fame, my star.
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
But me thou must bear hence, not send with them,
But carry me with thee to Seistan,
785 And place me on a bed, and mourn for me,
Thou, and the snow-haired Zal, and all thy friends.
And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above my bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all.
790 That so the passing horseman on the waste
May see my tomb a great way off, and cry:
'Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,
Whom his great father did in ignorance kill!'
And I be not forgotten in my grave."
795 And, with a mournful voice, Rustum replied:
"Fear not! as thou hast said, Sohrab, my son,
So shall it be; for I will burn my tents,
And quit the host, and bear thee hence with me,
And carry thee away to Seistan,
800 And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee,

[1] soil carried along by the river.

[2] Here the young man, with a seriousness and dignity coming from approaching death, gently restrains his father's passion.

With the snow-headed Zal, and all my friends.
And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above thy bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all,
805 And men shall not forget thee in thy grave.
And I will spare thy host; yea, let them go!
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace!
What should I do with slaying any more?
For would that all that I have ever slain
810 Might be once more alive; my bitterest foes,
And they who were called champions in their time,
And through whose death I won that fame I have—
And I were nothing but a common man,
A poor, mean soldier, and without renown,
815 So thou mightest live too, my son, my son!
Or rather would that I, even I myself,
Might now be lying on this bloody sand,
Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,
Not thou of mine! and I might die, not thou;
820 And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan;
And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine;
And say: 'O son, I weep thee not too sore,
For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine end!'
But now in blood and battles was my youth,
825 And full of blood and battles is my age,
And I shall never end this life of blood."
Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied:
"A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful[1] man!
But thou shalt yet have peace; only not now,
830 Not yet! but thou shalt have it on that day
When thou shalt sail in a high-masted ship,
Thou and the other peers of Kai Khosroo,
Returning home over the salt blue sea,
From laying thy dear master in his grave."

[1] awe-inspiring.

835 And Rustum gazed in Sohrab's face, and said:
"Soon be that day, my son, and deep that sea!
Till then, if fate so wills, let me endure."
He spoke; and Sohrab smiled on him, and took
The spear, and drew it from his side, and eased
840 His wound's imperious anguish; but the blood
Came welling[1] from the open gash, and life
Flowed with the stream;—all down his cold white side
The crimson torrent ran, dim now and soiled,
Like the soiled tissue of white violets
845 Left, freshly gathered, on their native bank,
By children whom their nurses call with haste
Indoors from the sun's eye; his head drooped low,
His limbs grew slack; motionless, white, he lay—
White, with eyes closed; only when heavy gasps,
850 Deep heavy gasps quivering through all his frame,
Convulsed him back to life, he opened them,
And fixed them feebly on his father's face;
Till now all strength was ebbed, and from his limbs
Unwillingly the spirit fled away,
855 Regretting the warm mansion[2] which it left,
And youth, and bloom, and this delightful world.
So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead;
And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak
Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.
860 As those black granite pillars, once high-reared
By Jemshid[3] in Persepolis, to bear
His house, now 'mid their broken flights of steps
Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side—
So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.
865 And night came down over the solemn waste,
And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,
And darkened all; and a cold fog, with night,

[1] slow gushing.
[2] abiding-place.
[3] Jemshid, a legendary king of Persia, who did great building in old Persepolis.

Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,
As of a great assembly loosed, and fires
870 Began to twinkle through the fog; for now
Both armies moved to camp, and took their meal;[1]
The Persians took it on the open sands
Southward, the Tartars by the river marge;
And Rustum and his son were left alone.

875 But the majestic river floated on,[2]
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,
Rejoicing, through the hushed Chorasmian waste,
Under the solitary moon;—he flowed
880 Right for the polar star, past Orgunjè,
Brimming, and bright, and large; then sands begin
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,
And split his currents; that for many a league
The shorn and parceled Oxus strains along
885 Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles—
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had
In his high mountain cradle in Pamere,
A foiled circuitous wanderer—till at last
The longed-for dash of waves is heard, and wide
890 His luminous home of waters opens, bright
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

[1] Everybody else went about his ordinary affairs.

[2] These last few lines are very beautiful. After the struggling battle and human tragedy of the poem, the mind needs some assurance of peace. This mood is felt and answered in these lines, which end with such tranquil calmness.

HORATIUS.

A LAY MADE ABOUT THE YEAR OF THE CITY CCCLX.

I.

LARS PORSENA of Clusium[1]
By the Nine Gods[2] he swore
That the great house of Tarquin[1]
Should suffer wrong no more.
5 By the Nine Gods[2] he swore it,
And named a trysting day,[3]
And bade his messengers ride forth,
East and west and south and north,
To summon his array.

II.

10 East and west and south and north
The messengers ride fast,
And tower and town and cottage
Have heard the trumpet's blast.
Shame on the false Etruscan
15 Who lingers in his home,
When Porsena of Clusium
Is on the march for Rome!

[1] Lars Porsena (Lars was an Etruscan title meaning King) was ruler of the town of Clusium, the head of the Etruscan confederacy of twelve cities (cf. l. 177). To him Tarquinius Superbus (or the Proud), the last king of Rome, cast out by the Romans, applied for aid. Lars Porsena engaged in war on his behalf, aided by several of the cities of the confederacy. Of the cities mentioned later, Volaterræ (l. 26), Cortona (l. 40), Falerii (l. 319), and Arretium (l. 58) belonged to the twelve cities. The other cities mentioned, as Populonia (l. 30), were not members of the confederacy, but joined in the expedition. We shall not, as a rule, be particular as to their situation. They are all cities of Etruria, and may be found in a classical atlas. The modern names, of course, are different.

[2] Not much was known of the Nine Gods of the Etruscan religion.

[3] day for meeting.

III.

The horsemen and the footmen
Are pouring in amain[1]
20 From many a stately market-place;
From many a fruitful plain;
From many a lonely hamlet,[2]
Which, hid by beach and pine,
Like an eagle's nest, hangs on the crest
25 Of purple Apennine;

IV.

From lordly Volaterræ,[3]
Where scowls the far-famed hold
Piled by the hands of giants
For godlike kings of old;
30 From seagirt Populonia,[3]
Whose sentinels descry
Sardinia's snowy mountain-tops
Fringing the southern sky;

V.

From the proud mart of Pisæ,[4]
35 Queen of the western waves,
Where ride Massilia's[5] triremes[6]
Heavy with fair-haired slaves;[7]
From where sweet Clanis[8] wanders
Through corn and vines and flowers;
40 From where Cortona lifts to heaven
Her diadem of towers.

[1] with vigorous hurry.
[2] a small village.
[3] See note on l. 1.
[4] Pisæ, on the site of modern Pisa, on the Arnus, near its mouth.
[5] now Marseilles.
[6] ships with three banks of oars.
[7] The Gauls, as later the Britons, were fair-haired; the Italians were, as a rule, dark.
[8] Clanis, a river in the territory of Clusium.

VI.

Tall are the oaks whose acorns
Drop in dark Auser's[1] rill;
Fat are the stags that champ the boughs
45 Of the Ciminian hill;
Beyond all streams Clitumnus
Is to the herdsman dear;
Best of all pools the fowler loves
The great Volsinian mere.[2]

VII.

50 But now no stroke of woodman
Is heard by Auser's rill;
No hunter tracks the stag's green path
Up the Ciminian hill;
Unwatched along Clitumnus
55 Grazes the milk-white steer;
Unharmed the water fowl may dip
In the Volsinian mere.

VIII.

The harvests of Arretium,[3]
This year, old men shall reap,
60 This year, young boys in Umbro
Shall plunge the struggling sheep;
And in the vats[4] of Luna,
This year, the must[5] shall foam
Round the white feet of laughing girls
65 Whose sires have marched to Rome.

[1] Auser and Clitumnus were rivers of Etruria.

[2] a lake near Volsinii, one of the twelve cities.

[3] See note on l. 1.

[4] the wine-vats into which the grapes were thrown to be trampled on. Luna was noted for its wine.

[5] the new wine.

IX.

There be thirty chosen prophets,
  The wisest of the land,
Who alway by Lars Porsena
  Both morn and evening stand:
70 Evening and morn the Thirty
  Have turned the verses o'er,
Traced from the right[1] on linen white
  By mighty seers of yore.

X.

And with one voice the Thirty
75 Have their glad answer given:
"Go forth, go forth, Lars Porsena;
  Go forth, beloved of Heaven;
Go, and return in glory
  To Clusium's royal dome;
80 And hang round Nurscia's altars[2]
  The golden shields of Rome."

XI.

And now hath every city
  Sent up her tale[3] of men;
The foot are fourscore thousand,
85 The horse are thousands ten:
Before the gates of Sutrium[4]
  Is met the great array.
A proud man was Lars Porsena
  Upon the trysting day.

[1] The Etruscan writing ran from right to left.

[2] Nurscia, the Etruscan goddess of fortune.

[3] required number.

[4] a town in southern Etruria, convenient as a starting point for Rome, about thirty miles away.

XII.

90 For all the Etruscan armies
  Were ranged beneath his eye,
And many a banished Roman,[1]
  And many a stout ally;
And with a mighty following
95 To join the muster came
The Tusculan Mamilius,[2]
  Prince of the Latian name.

XIII.

But by the yellow[3] Tiber
  Was tumult and affright:
100 From all the spacious champaign[4]
  To Rome men took their flight.
A mile around the city,
  The throng stopped up the ways;
A fearful sight it was to see
105 Through two long nights and days.

XIV.

For aged folks on crutches,
  And women great with child,
And mothers sobbing over babes
  That clung to them and smiled,
110 And sick men borne in litters[5]
  High on the necks of slaves,
And troops of sun-burned husbandmen
  With reaping-hooks and staves,[6]

[1] Romans who had followed their banished king.

[2] Tusculum, a powerful city of Latium, not far from Rome. Mamilius was the husband of Tarquin's daughter.

[3] "Yellow" is a common epithet for the swiftly running Tiber: see l. 470.

[4] the open country about Rome, now called the Campagna.

[5] Litters, and not carriages, were long the common way of getting about for such as would not ride or walk.

[6] For the descriptive power of this stanza and the following, see p. 18.

XV.

And droves of mules and asses
115 Laden with skins[1] of wine,
And endless flocks of goats and sheep,
And endless herds of kine,
And endless trains of wagons
That creaked beneath the weight
120 Of corn-sacks and of household goods,
Choked every roaring gate.

XVI.

Now, from the rock Tarpeian,[2]
Could the wan[3] burghers[4] spy
The line of blazing villages
125 Red in the midnight sky.
The Fathers[5] of the City,
They sat all night and day,
For every hour some horseman came
With tidings of dismay.

XVII.

130 To eastward and to westward
Have spread the Tuscan bands;
Nor house, nor fence, nor dovecote
In Crustumerium[6] stands.
Verbenna[7] down to Ostia[8]
135 Hath wasted all the plain;
Astur[9] hath stormed Janiculum,[10]
And the stout guards are slain.

[1] Skins were the ancient bottles and hogsheads.

[2] The Tarpeian rock on the Capitoline Hill.

[3] pale from fatigue.

[4] citizens.

[5] The members of the Senate were called Patres Conscripti, or Conscript Fathers.

[6] a city of Latium, not far from Rome.

[7] See l. 191.

[8] the port of Rome.

[9] See l. 350.

[10] a suburb of Rome, on the other side of the Tiber.

XVIII.

I wis,[1] in all the Senate,
There was no heart so bold,
140 But sore it ached and fast it beat,
When that ill news was told.
Forthwith up rose the Consul,[2]
Up rose the Fathers all;
In haste they girded up their gowns,[3]
145 And hied[4] them to the wall.

XIX.

They held a council standing
Before the River-Gate;
Short time was there, ye well may guess,
For musing or debate.
150 Out spake the Consul roundly:[5]
"The bridge must straight go down;
For, since Janiculum is lost,
Nought else can save the town."

XX.

Just then a scout came flying,
155 All wild with haste and fear;
"To arms! to arms! Sir Consul:
Lars Porsena is here!"
On the low hills to westward
The Consul fixed his eye,
160 And saw the swarthy storm of dust
Rise fast along the sky.

[1] The form should be *Ywis:* the word means "assuredly." Macaulay uses it as though the *I* were the personal pronoun.

[2] Two Consuls were the chief executive officers of the Roman republic.

[3] The Roman toga was a loose, flowing garment, which had to be girt up or laid aside for any rapid work.

[4] hastened.

[5] plainly, without mincing matters.

XXI.

And nearer fast and nearer
  Doth the red whirlwind come;
And louder still and still more loud,
165 From underneath that rolling cloud,
Is heard the trumpet's war-note proud,
  The trampling, and the hum.
And plainly and more plainly
  Now through the gloom appears,
170 Far to left and far to right,
In broken gleams of dark-blue light,
The long array of helmets bright,
  The long array of spears.

XXII.

And plainly and more plainly,
175 Above that glimmering line,
Now might ye see the banners
  Of twelve fair cities shine;[1]
But the banner of proud Clusium
  Was highest of them all,
180 The terror of the Umbrian,
  The terror of the Gaul.

XXIII.

And plainly and more plainly
  Now might the burghers know,
By port and vest,[2] by horse and crest,
185 Each warlike Lucumo.[3]
There Cilnius of Arretium
  On his fleet roan was seen;
And Astur of the four-fold shield,
Girt with the brand none else may wield,

[1] See note to l. 1.
[2] by their bearing and garments.
[3] The chief of an Etruscan city was so called by the Romans.

190 Tolumnius with the belt of gold,
And dark Verbenna from the hold
By reedy Thrasymene.[1]

XXIV.

Fast by the royal standard,
O'erlooking all the war,
195 Lars Porsena of Clusium
Sat in his ivory car.
By the right wheel rode Mamilius,
Prince of the Latian name;
And by the left false Sextus,[2]
200 That wrought the deed of shame.

XXV.

But when the face of Sextus
Was seen among the foes,
A yell that rent the firmament
From all the town arose.
205 On the house-tops was no woman
But spat towards him and hissed,
No child but screamed out curses,
And shook its little fist.

XXVI.

But the Consul's brow was sad,
210 And the Consul's speech was low,
And darkly looked he at the wall,
And darkly at the foe.
"Their van will be upon us
Before the bridge goes down;
215 And if they once may win the bridge,
What hope to save the town?"

[1] the largest lake in Etruria; it was comparatively shallow.

[2] Sextus Tarquinius, the nephew of the king.

XXVII.

Then out spake brave Horatius,
The Captain of the Gate:
"To every man upon this earth
220 Death cometh soon or late.
And how can man die better
Than facing fearful odds,
For the ashes of his fathers,
And the temples of his gods,

XXVIII.

225 "And for the tender mother
Who dandled him to rest,
And for the wife who nurses
His baby at her breast,
And for the holy maidens
230 Who feed the eternal flame,[1]
To save them from false Sextus
That wrought the deed of shame?

XXIX.

"Hew down the bridge, Sir Consul,
With all the speed ye may;
235 I, with two more to help me,
Will hold the foe in play.[2]
In yon strait[3] path a thousand
May well be stopped by three.
Now who will stand on either hand,
240 And keep the bridge with me?"

[1] the virgin priestesses in the temple of Vesta, where the fire burned forever.

[2] will keep them occupied.

[3] narrow.

XXX.

Then out spake Spurius Lartius;
A Ramnian[1] proud was he:
"Lo, I will stand at thy right hand,
And keep the bridge with thee."
245 And out spake strong Herminius;
Of Titian[1] blood was he:
"I will abide on thy left side,
And keep the bridge with thee."

XXXI.

"Horatius," quoth the Consul,
250 "As thou sayest, so let it be."
And straight against that great array
Forth went the dauntless Three.
For Romans in Rome's quarrel
Spared neither land nor gold,
255 Nor son nor wife, nor limb nor life,
In the brave days of old.

XXXII.

Then none was for a party;[2]
Then all were for the state;
Then the great man helped the poor,
260 And the poor man loved the great:
Then lands were fairly portioned;
Then spoils were fairly sold:
The Romans were like brothers
In the brave days of old.

[1] The Roman nobles were divided into three tribes—the Ramnes, the Tities, the Luceres.

[2] It must be remembered that the poem is supposed to be a ballad sung by the Romans in later times. The singer was a plebeian, and wrote in times of public discord. This stanza and the next give us his own thoughts on his own times, when the ancient harmony was much broken.

XXXIII.

265 Now Roman is to Roman
More hateful than a foe;
And the Tribunes[1] beard the high,
And the Fathers[2] grind the low.
As we wax hot in faction,
270 In battle we wax cold:
Wherefore men fight not as they fought
In the brave days of old.

XXXIV.

Now while the Three were tightening
Their harness[3] on their backs,
275 The Consul was the foremost man
To take in hand an axe:
And Fathers mixed with Commons
Seized hatchet, bar, and crow,
And smote upon the planks above,
280 And loosed the props below.

XXXV.

Meanwhile the Tuscan army,
Right glorious to behold,
Came flashing back the noonday light,
Rank behind rank, like surges bright
285 Of a broad sea of gold.
Four hundred trumpets sounded
A peal of warlike glee,
As that great host, with measured tread,
And spears advanced, and ensigns spread,
290 Rolled slowly towards the bridge's head,
Where stood the dauntless Three.

[1] The Tribunes of the People were officers chosen to assure the plebeians their rights.

[2] The Senators or Patricians.

[3] armor.

XXXVI.

The Three stood calm and silent,
And looked upon the foes,
And a great shout of laughter
295 From all the vanguard rose:
And forth three chiefs came spurring
Before that deep array;
To earth they sprang, their swords they drew,
And lifted high their shields, and flew
300 To win the narrow way;

XXXVII.

Aunus from green Tifernum,
Lord of the Hill of Vines;
And Seius, whose eight hundred slaves
Sicken in Ilva's[1] mines;
305 And Picus, long to Clusium
Vassal in peace and war,
Who led to fight his Umbrian powers
From that gray crag where, girt with towers,
The fortress of Nequinum lowers
310 O'er the pale waves of Nar.[2]

XXXVIII.

Stout Lartius hurled down Aunus
Into the stream beneath:
Herminius struck at Seius,
And clove him to the teeth:
315 At Picus brave Horatius
Darted one fiery thrust;
And the proud Umbrian's gilded arms
Clashed in the bloody dust.

[1] the island of Elba.
[2] a tributary of the Tiber, noteworthy for the sulphuretted character of its waters, which were whitish in color.

XXXIX.

Then Ocnus of Falerii[1]
320 Rushed on the Roman Three;
And Lausulus of Urgo,
The rover of the sea;
And Aruns of Volsinium,[1]
Who slew the great wild boar,
325 The great wild boar that had his den
Amidst the reeds of Cosa's fen,
And wasted fields, and slaughtered men,
Along Albinia's shore.

XL.

Herminius smote down Aruns:
330 Lartius laid Ocnus low:
Right to the heart of Lausulus
Horatius sent a blow.
"Lie there," he cried, "fell pirate!
No more, aghast and pale,
335 From Ostia's[2] walls the crowd shall mark
The track of thy destroying bark.
No more Campania's[3] hinds shall fly
To woods and caverns when they spy
Thy thrice-accursed sail."

XLI.

340 But now no sound of laughter
Was heard among the foes.
A wild and wrathful clamor
From all the vanguard rose.
Six spears' lengths from the entrance
345 Halted that deep array,
And for a space no man came forth
To win the narrow way.

[1] Falerii and Volsinii were two of the twelve cities.

[2] See note on l. 134.

[3] a province of Italy, to the south of Rome.

XLII.

But hark! the cry is Astur:
  And lo! the ranks divide;
350 And the great Lord of Luna
  Comes with his stately stride.
Upon his ample shoulders
  Clangs loud the fourfold shield,
And in his hand he shakes the brand
355 Which none but he can wield.

XLIII.

He smiled on those bold Romans
  A smile serene and high;
He eyed the flinching Tuscans,
  And scorn was in his eye.
360 Quoth he, "The she-wolf's litter[1]
  Stand savagely at bay:
But will ye dare to follow,
  If Astur clears the way?"

XLIV.

Then, whirling up his broadsword
365 With both hands to the height,
He rushed against Horatius,
  And smote with all his might.
With shield and blade Horatius
  Right deftly[2] turned the blow.
370 The blow, though turned, came yet too nigh;
It missed his helm, but gashed his thigh:
The Tuscans raised a joyful cry
  To see the red blood flow.

[1] Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome, had been exposed at birth, according to the legend, and suckled by a she-wolf.

[2] cleverly and neatly.

XLV.

He reeled, and on Herminius
375 He leaned one breathing-space;
Then, like a wild-cat mad with wounds,
Sprang right at Astur's face.
Through teeth, and skull, and helmet
So fierce a thrust he sped,
380 The good sword stood a hand-breadth out
Behind the Tuscan's head.

XLVI.

And the great Lord of Luna
Fell at that deadly stroke,
As falls on Mount Alvernus[1]
385 A thunder-smitten oak.
Far o'er the crashing forest
The giant arms lie spread;
And the pale augurs,[2] muttering low,
Gaze on the blasted head.

XLVII.

390 On Astur's throat Horatius
Right firmly pressed his heel,
And thrice and four times tugged amain,
Ere he wrenched out the steel.
"And see," he cried, "the welcome,
395 Fair guests, that waits you here!
What noble Lucumo comes next
To taste our Roman cheer?"[3]

[1] the watershed in which the Tiber rises.
[2] priests who divined the future.
[3] good fare.

XLVIII.

But at his haughty challenge
A sullen murmur ran,
400 Mingled of wrath, and shame, and dread,
Along that glittering van.[1]
There lacked not men of prowess,
Nor men of lordly race;
For all Etruria's noblest
405 Were round the fatal place.

XLIX.

But all Etruria's noblest
Felt their hearts sink to see
On the earth the bloody corpses,
In the path the dauntless Three:
410 And, from the ghastly entrance
Where those bold Romans stood,
All shrank, like boys who unaware,
Ranging the woods to start a hare,
Come to the mouth of the dark lair
415 Where, growling low, a fierce old bear
Lies amidst bones and blood.

L.

Was none who would be foremost
To lead such dire attack:
But those behind cried "Forward!'
420 And those before cried "Back!"
And backward now and forward
Wavers the deep array;
And on the tossing sea of steel,
To and fro the standards reel;
425 And the victorious trumpet-peal
Dies fitfully away.

[1] the advance guard of the army.

LI.

Yet one man for one moment
  Stood out before the crowd;
Well known was he to all the Three,
430 And they gave him greeting loud,
"Now welcome, welcome, Sextus!
  Now welcome to thy home!
Why dost thou stay, and turn away?
  Here lies the road to Rome."

LII.

435 Thrice looked he at the city;
  Thrice looked he at the dead;
And thrice came on in fury,
  And thrice turned back in dread:
And, white with fear and hatred,
440 Scowled at the narrow way
Where, wallowing in a pool of blood,
  The bravest Tuscans lay.

LIII.

But meanwhile axe and lever
  Have manfully been plied;
445 And now the bridge hangs tottering
  Above the boiling tide.
"Come back, come back, Horatius!"
  Loud cried the Fathers all.
"Back, Lartius! back, Herminius!
450 Back, ere the ruin fall!"

LIV.

Back darted Spurius Lartius;
  Herminius darted back:
And, as they passed, beneath their feet
  They felt the timbers crack.

455 But when they turned their faces,
And on the farther shore
Saw brave Horatius stand alone,
They would have crossed once more.

LV.

But with a crash like thunder
460 Fell every loosened beam,
And, like a dam, the mighty wreck
Lay right athwart the stream.
And a long shout of triumph
Rose from the walls of Rome,
465 As to the highest turret-tops
Was splashed the yellow foam.

LVI.

And, like a horse unbroken
When first he feels the rein,
The furious river struggled hard,
470 And tossed his tawny[1] mane,
And burst the curb, and bounded,
Rejoicing to be free,
And whirling down in fierce career,
Battlement, and plank, and pier,
475 Rushed headlong to the sea.

LVII.

Alone stood brave Horatius,
But constant[2] still in mind;
Thrice thirty thousand foes before,
And the broad flood behind.
480 "Down with him!" cried false Sextus,
With a smile on his pale face.
"Now yield thee," cried Lars Porsena,
"Now yield thee to our grace."

[1] See l. 98. [2] firm

LVIII.

Round turned he, as not deigning
485 Those craven[1] ranks to see;
Nought spake he to Lars Porsena,
To Sextus nought spake he;
But he saw on Palatinus[2]
The white porch of his home;
490 And he spake to the noble river
That rolls by the towers of Rome.

LIX.

"O Tiber! father Tiber![3]
To whom the Romans pray,
A Roman's life, a Roman's arms,
495 Take thou in charge this day!"
So he spake, and speaking sheathed
The good sword by his side,
And with his harness on his back,
Plunged headlong in the tide.

LX.

500 No sound of joy or sorrow
Was heard from either bank;
But friends and foes in dumb surprise,
With parted lips and straining eyes,
Stood gazing where he sank;
505 And when above the surges
They saw his crest appear,
All Rome sent forth a rapturous cry,
And even the ranks of Tuscany
Could scarce forbear to cheer.

[1] cowardly, for having been stopped so long by so few.

[2] The Palatine is one of the Seven Hills of Rome.

[3] He thinks of the river as a protecting god; so in l. 524. To the Romans it was Father Tiber because it had protected Romulus and Remus when exposed on its waters.

LXI.

510 But fiercely ran the current,
  Swollen high by months of rain:
And fast his blood was flowing;
  And he was sore in pain,
And heavy with his armor,
515 And spent[1] with changing blows:
And oft they thought him sinking,
  But still again he rose.

LXII.

Never, I ween,[2] did swimmer,
  In such an evil case,
520 Struggle through such a raging flood
  Safe to the landing-place:
But his limbs were borne up bravely
  By the brave heart within,
And our good father Tiber[3]
525 Bare bravely up his chin.

LXIII.

"Curse on him!" quoth false Sextus;
  "Will not the villain drown?
But for this stay, ere close of day
  We should have sacked[4] the town!"
530 "Heaven help him!" quoth Lars Porsena,[5]
  "And bring him safe to shore;
For such a gallant feat of arms
  Was never seen before."

[1] wearied out, his strength gone.
[2] I think.
[3] See l. 492.
[4] pillaged.
[5] The difference between the coward and the high-minded enemy is well brought out in these two speeches.

LXIV.

And now he feels the bottom;
535 Now on dry earth he stands;
Now round him throng the Fathers
To press his gory hands;
And now, with shouts and clapping,
And noise of weeping loud,
540 He enters through the River-Gate,
Borne by the joyous crowd.

LXV.

They gave him of the corn-land,
That was of public right,
As much as two strong oxen
545 Could plow from morn till night;
And they made a molten image,
And set it up on high,
And there it stands unto this day
To witness if I lie.

LXVI.

550 It stands in the Comitium,
Plain for all folk to see;
Horatius in his harness,
Halting upon one knee:
And underneath is written,
555 In letters all of gold,
How valiantly he kept the bridge
In the brave days of old.

[1] that part of the Forum used for the assembly of the thirty Curiæ.

LXVII.

And still his name sounds stirring
  Unto the men of Rome,
560 As the trumpet-blast that cries to them
  To charge the Volscian[1] home;
And wives still pray to Juno[2]
  For boys with hearts as bold
As his who kept the bridge so well
565 In the brave days of old.

LXVIII.

And in the nights of winter,
  When the cold north winds blow,
And the long howling of the wolves
  Is heard amidst the snow;
570 When round the lonely cottage
  Roars loud the tempest's din,
And the good logs of Algidus[3]
  Roar louder yet within;

LXIX.

When the oldest cask is opened,
575 And the largest lamp is lit;
When the chestnuts glow in the embers,
  And the kid turns on the spit;
When young and old in circle
  Around the firebrands close;
580 When the girls are weaving baskets,
  And the lads are shaping bows;

[1] The Volsci were a people of central Italy, with whom the Romans in their early days were often at war.

[2] the goddess of marriage.

[3] one of the Alban Hills, not far from Rome.

LXX.

When the goodman mends his armor,
  And trims his helmet's plume;
When the goodwife's shuttle merrily
585 Goes flashing through the loom;
With weeping and with laughter
  Still is the story told,
How well Horatius kept the bridge
  In the brave days of old.

THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL.

Note by the Author.—According to the mythology of the Romancers, the San Greal, or Holy Grail, was the cup out of which Jesus partook of the last supper with his disciples. It was brought into England by Joseph of Arimathea, and remained there, an object of pilgrimage and adoration, for many years in the keeping of his lineal descendants. It was incumbent upon those who had charge of it to be chaste in thought, word, and deed; but one of the keepers having broken this condition, the Holy Grail disappeared. From that time it was a favorite enterprise of the knights of Arthur's court to go in search of it. Sir Galahad was at last successful in finding it, as may be read in the seventeenth book of the Romance of King Arthur. Tennyson has made Sir Galahad the subject of one of the most exquisite of his poems.

The plot (if I may give that name to any thing so slight) of the following poem is my own, and, to serve its purposes, I have enlarged the circle of competition in search of the miraculous cup in such a manner as to include, not only other persons than the heroes of the Round Table, but also a period of time subsequent to the date of King Arthur's reign.

Prelude to Part First.

Over his keys the musing organist,
  Beginning doubtfully and far away,
First lets his fingers wander as they list,
  And builds a bridge from Dreamland for his lay:[1]
5 Then, as the touch of his loved instrument
  Gives hope and fervor, nearer draws[2] his theme,
First guessed by faint auroral[3] flushes sent
  Along the wavering vista of his dream.

Not only around our infancy
10 Doth heaven with all its splendors lie:[4]

[1] song, poem.

[2] At first the idea was vague and indistinct, like a dream. As he goes on, the poet brings it into fuller shape and more definite outline.

[3] like the Aurora Borealis, or Northern Lights.

[4] This refers to the line in Wordsworth's *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality:*
"Heaven lies about us in our infancy!"

Daily, with souls that cringe and plot,
We Sinais[1] climb and know it not;

Over our manhood bend the skies;
  Against our fallen and traitor lives
15 The great winds utter prophecies;[2]
  With our faint hearts the mountain strives;
Its arms outstretched, the druid[3] wood
  Waits with its benedicite,[4]
And to our age's drowsy blood
20 Still shouts the inspiring sea.

Earth[5] gets its price for what Earth gives us;
  The beggar is taxed for a corner to die in,
The priest hath his fee who comes and shrives us,
  We bargain for the graves we lie in;
25 At the Devil's booth are all things sold,[6]
Each ounce of dross costs its ounce of gold;
  For a cap and bells our lives we pay,
Bubbles we earn with a whole soul's tasking;
  'Tis heaven alone that is given away,
30 'Tis only God may be had for the asking;
There is no price set on the lavish summer,
And June may be had by the poorest comer.

And what is so rare as a day in June?
  Then, if ever, come perfect days;
35 Then Heaven tries earth if it be in tune,
  And over it softly her warm ear lays:

[1] Moses ascended Mount Sinai to be with God. Lowell means that we may be and are with God every day without knowing it.

[2] The strong powers of nature are a constant reproach to our weak sinfulness.

[3] The Druids, priests of ancient Gaul and Britain, worshipped in the great oak groves.

[4] A blessing.

[5] Earthly things (of no real value) we must pay for; heavenly things (l. 30) we might have for nothing, had we sense enough to know it.

[6] The word *sold* should have the emphasis, as contrasted with *asking* (l. 30).

Whether we look, or whether we listen,
We hear life murmur, or see it glisten;
Every clod feels a stir of might,
40 An instinct within it that reaches and towers,
And, grasping blindly above it for light,
Climbs to a soul for grass and flowers;
The flush of life may well be seen
Thrilling back over hills and valleys;
45 The cowslip startles in meadows green,
The buttercup catches the sun in its chalice,[1]
And there's never a leaf or a blade too mean
To be some happy creature's palace;
The little bird sits at his door in the sun,
50 Atilt like a blossom among the leaves,
And lets his illumined being o'errun
With the deluge of summer it receives;
His mate feels the eggs beneath her wings,
And the heart in her dumb breast flutters and sings;
55 He sings to the wide world, and she to her nest.[2]
In the nice ear of Nature which song is the best?

Now is the high-tide of the year,
And whatever of life hath ebbed away
Comes flooding back, with a ripply cheer,
60 Into every bare inlet and creek and bay;
Now the heart is so full that a drop overfills it,
We are happy now because God so wills it;
No matter how barren the past may have been,
'Tis enough for us now that the leaves are green;
65 We sit in the warm shade and feel right well
How the sap creeps up and the blossoms swell;
We may shut our eyes, but we cannot help knowing
That skies are clear and grass is growing;

[1] cup.
[2] We do not hear the song of the female bird; still, it may have its own exquisite fineness, for all that.

The breeze comes whispering in our ear,
70 That dandelions are blossoming near,
That maize[1] has sprouted, that streams are flowing,
That the river is bluer than the sky,
That the robin is plastering his house hard by;
And if the breeze kept the good news back,
75 For other couriers we should not lack;
We could guess it all by yon heifer's lowing,—
And hark! how clear bold chanticleer,[2]
Warmed with the new wine of the year,
Tells all in his lusty crowing!

80 Joy comes, grief goes, we know not how;
Everything is happy now,
Everything is upward striving;
'Tis as easy now for the heart to be true
As for the grass to be green or skies to be blue,—
85 'Tis the natural way of living:
Who knows whither the clouds have fled?
In the unscarred heaven they leave no wake;
And the eyes forget the tears they have shed,
The heart forgets its sorrow and ache;
90 The soul partakes the season's youth,
And the sulphurous rifts of passion and woe
Lie deep 'neath a silence pure and smooth,
Like burnt-out craters healed with snow.
What wonder if Sir Launfal now
95 Remembered the keeping of his vow?[3]

[1] the Indian corn.
[2] the barnyard cock.
[3] Lines 80–95 give the connection between the Prelude and Part First.

Part First.

I.

"My golden spurs[1] now bring to me,
And bring to me my richest mail,[2]
For to-morrow I go over land and sea
In search of the Holy Grail;
100 Shall never a bed for me be spread,
Nor shall a pillow be under my head,
Till I begin my vow to keep;
Here on the rushes[3] will I sleep,
And perchance there may come a vision true
105 Ere day create the world anew."
Slowly Sir Launfal's eyes grew dim,
Slumber fell like a cloud on him,
And into his soul the vision flew.[4]

II.

The crows flapped over by twos and threes,
110 In the pool drowsed the cattle up to their knees,
The little birds sang as if it were
The one day of summer in all the year,
And the very leaves seemed to sing on the trees:
The castle alone in the landscape lay
115 Like an outpost of winter, dull and gray;
'Twas the proudest hall in the North Countree,[5]
And never its gates might opened be,
Save to lord or lady of high degree;

[1] Golden spurs were the symbol of knighthood. When a knight disgraced himself his golden spurs were hacked off his heels by the cook's cleaver.

[2] See l. 131.

[3] The floors in old times were strewn with rushes.

[4] The "Vision" really begins with l. 109 and ends at l. 327. What has gone before has been introductory.

[5] northern England presumably; the form of the word is common in older English, and especially in ballad-poetry.

Summer besieged it on every side,
120 But the churlish [1] stone her assaults defied;
She could not scale the chilly wall,
Though round it for leagues her pavilions [2] tall
Stretched left and right,
Over the hills and out of sight;
125 Green and broad was every tent,
And out of each a murmur went
Till the breeze fell off at night.

III.

The drawbridge dropped with a surly clang,
And through the dark arch [3] a charger sprang,
130 Bearing Sir Launfal, the maiden [4] knight,
In his gilded mail, that flamed so bright
It seemed the dark castle had gathered all
Those shafts the fierce sun had shot over its wall
In his siege [5] of three hundred summers long,
135 And, binding them all in one blazing sheaf,[6]
Had cast them forth; so, young and strong,
And lightsome as a locust leaf,
Sir Launfal flashed forth in his unscarred [7] mail,
To seek in all climes for the Holy Grail.[8]

IV.

140 It was morning on hill and stream and tree,
And morning in the young knight's heart;
Only the castle moodily
Rebuffed the gifts of the sunshine free,
And gloomed by itself apart;

[1] rude, like a churl or rude, ill-mannered fellow.

[2] Summer is represented as an army encamped in tents; so in l. 125.

[3] of the castle gateway.

[4] He has as yet done no service; his armor was unscarred by battle (l. 138).

[5] See ll. 119–127.

[6] sheaf, or quiver of arrows.

[7] See l. 130.

[8] See the introductory NOTE BY THE AUTHOR, and ll. 253, 293, 315, 353. One of the *Idylls of the King* tells how the Round Table sought the Holy Grail.

145 The season brimmed all other things up
Full as the rain fills the pitcher-plant's cup.

V.

As Sir Launfal made morn[1] through the darksome gate,
He was 'ware of a leper[2] crouched by the same,
Who begged with his hand and moaned as he sate;
150 And a loathing over Sir Launfal came;
The sunshine went out of his soul with a thrill,
The flesh 'neath his armor did shrink and crawl,
And midway[3] its leap his heart stood still
Like a frozen waterfall;
155 For this man, so foul and bent of stature,
Rasped harshly against his dainty nature,
And seemed the one blot on the summer morn,[4]—
So he tossed him a piece of gold in scorn.

VI.

The leper raised not the gold from the dust:
160 "Better to me the poor man's crust,
Better the blessing of the poor,
Though I turn me empty from his door;
That is no true alms which the hand can hold;[5]
He gives nothing but worthless gold
165 Who gives from a sense of duty;
But he who gives a slender mite,
And gives to that which is out of sight,
That thread of the all-sustaining Beauty
Which runs through all and doth all unite,—

[1] with his golden armor.

[2] The hideous disease of leprosy was common in the Middle Ages.

[3] in the midst of.

[4] Sir Launfal, enjoying the glad beauty of spring, was shocked and pained at the hideous sight, and tried to get rid of it as quickly as possible.

[5] See l. 170.

170 The hand cannot clasp the whole of his alms,
The heart outstretches its eager palms,
For a god goes with it and makes it store
To the soul that was starving in darkness before."

Prelude to Part Second.

Down swept the chill wind from the mountain peak,
175 From the snow five thousand summers[1] old;
On open wold[2] and hill-top bleak
It had gathered all the cold,
And whirled it like sleet on the wanderer's cheek;
It carried a shiver everywhere
180 From the unleafed boughs and pastures bare;
The little brook heard it and built a roof
'Neath which he could house him, winter-proof;
All night by the white stars' frosty gleams
He groined[3] his arches and matched his beams;
185 Slender and clear were his crystal spars
As the lashes of light that trim the stars;
He sculptured every summer delight
In his halls and chambers out of sight;
Sometimes his tinkling waters slipt
190 Down through a frost-leaved forest-crypt,[4]
Long, sparkling aisles of steel-stemmed trees
Bending to counterfeit a breeze;
Sometimes the roof no fretwork knew
But silvery mosses that downward grew;[5]
195 Sometimes it was carved in sharp relief
With quaint arabesques[6] of ice-fern leaf;

[1] The snow never melted, even in the hottest summer.

[2] open field-like country.

[3] A "groin" is made by four arching sides coming together.

[4] *crypt* because it was down underneath, as if in the cellar; *forest* because the ice froze in form of trees.

[5] like stalactites.

[6] intricate and complicated patterns.

Sometimes it was simply smooth and clear
For the gladness of heaven to shine through, and here
He had caught the nodding bulrush-tops
200 And hung them thickly with diamond drops,
Which crystalled the beams of moon and sun,
And made a star of every one:
No mortal builder's most rare device
Could match this winter-palace of ice;
205 'Twas as if every image that mirrored lay
In his depths serene through the summer day,
Each flitting shadow of earth and sky,
Lest the happy model should be lost,
Had been mimicked in fairy masonry
210 By the elfin builders of the frost.[1]

Within the hall are song and laughter,
The cheeks of Christmas glow red and jolly,
And sprouting is every corbel[2] and rafter
With the lightsome green of ivy and holly;
215 Through the deep gulf of the chimney wide
Wallows the Yule-log's[3] roaring tide;[4]
The broad flame-pennons droop and flap
And belly and tug as a flag in the wind;
Like a locust shrills the imprisoned sap,[5]
220 Hunted to death in its galleries blind;
And swift little troops of silent sparks,
Now pausing, now scattering away as in fear,
Go threading the soot-forest's tangled darks
Like herds of startled deer.

[1] This charming passage is delightful in itself, but can hardly be said to have any especial connection with the rest of the poem. Lowell wrote it because he liked to.

[2] *Corbel* is the architectural term for the end of a rafter.

[3] The "Yule-log" is the great log brought in on Christmas eve.

[4] The roaring flame is compared to the tide setting into the deep gulf (of the chimney).

[5] in the logs.

225 But the wind without was eager[1] and sharp,
Of Sir Launfal's gray[2] hair it makes a harp,
And rattles and wrings
The icy strings,
Singing, in dreary monotone,
230 A Christmas carol of its own,
Whose burden still, as he might guess,
Was—"Shelterless, shelterless, shelterless!"
The voice of the seneschal flared like a torch
As he shouted the wanderer away from the porch,[3]
235 And he sat down in the gateway and saw all night
The great hall-fire, so cheery and bold,
Through the window-slits of the castle old,
Build out its piers of ruddy light[4]
Against the drift of the cold.

Part Second.

I.

240 There was never a leaf on bush or tree,
The bare boughs rattled shudderingly;
The river was dumb and could not speak,
For the frost's swift shuttles its shroud had spun;[5]
A single crow on the tree-top bleak
245 From his shining feathers shed off the cold sun;
Again it was morning, but shrunk and cold,
As if her veins were sapless and old,
And she rose up decrepitly
For a last dim look at earth and sea.

[1] *Eager* originally meant much the same as *sharp*. So in the word *vinegar*.

[2] Thus Lowell gives us the idea that after long years Sir Launfal has come back. As is soon seen, he has long been given up for lost and wholly forgotten. See l. 251.

[3] See l. 250.

[4] Try to realize this figure—the light from the narrow window shining into the thick darkness—and you will see how excellent it is.

[5] The ice on the brook is now compared to its shroud, as though it were not only dumb, but dead.

II.

250 Sir Launfal turned from his own hard gate,
For another heir in his earldom sate;[1]
An old, bent man, worn out and frail,
He came back from seeking the Holy Grail;
Little he recked of his earldom's loss,
255 No more on his surcoat was blazoned the cross,
But deep in his soul the sign he wore,
The badge of the suffering and the poor.

III.

Sir Launfal's raiment thin and spar
Was idle mail 'gainst the barbed air,
260 For it was just at the Christmas-time;
So he mused, as he sat, of a sunnier clime,
And sought for a shelter from cold and snow
In the light and warmth of long ago;[2]
He sees the snake-like caravan crawl[3]
265 O'er the edge of the desert, black and small,
Then nearer and nearer, till, one by one,
He can count the camels in the sun,
As over the red-hot sands they pass
To where, in its slender necklace of grass,
270 The little spring laughed and leapt in the shade,
And with its own self like an infant played,
And waved its signal of palms.

IV.

"For Christ's sweet sake, I beg an[4] alms;"
The happy camels may reach the spring,
275 But Sir Launfal sees naught save the grewsome thing,

[1] He had been so long away that he had been given up as dead.

[2] "O, who can hold a fire in his hand
By thinking on the frosty Caucasus?"
—RICHARD II., i, 3, 294.

[3] His thoughts went back to the Holy Land.

[4] The word *alms* is really singular, in spite of the *s*.

The leper, lank as the rain-blanched bone,
That cowered beside him, a thing as lone
And white as the ice-isles of Northern seas[1]
In the desolate horror of his disease.

V.

280 And Sir Launfal said,—"I behold in thee
An image of Him who died on the tree;[2]
Thou also hast had thy crown of thorns,—
Thou also hast had the world's buffets and scorns,—
And to thy life were not denied
285 The wounds in the hands and feet and side;
Mild Mary's Son, acknowledge[3] me;
Behold, through him, I give to thee!"

VI.

Then the soul of the leper stood up in his eyes
And looked at Sir Launfal, and straightway he
290 Remembered in what a haughtier guise
He had flung an alms to leprosie,
When he caged[4] his young life up in gilded mail
And set forth in search of the Holy Grail,
The heart within him was ashes and dust;
295 He parted in twain his single crust,
He broke the ice on the streamlet's brink,
And gave the leper to eat and drink;
'Twas a moldy crust of coarse brown bread,
'Twas water out of a wooden bowl,—
300 Yet with fine wheaten bread was the leper fed,
And 'twas red wine he drank with his thirsty soul.

[1] One sign of leprosy was a horrible paleness.

[2] the cross.

[3] "Whosoever therefore shall acknowledge me before men, him will I acknowledge also before my Father which is in heaven."—Matt. x. 32.

[4] gave himself no opportunity to do as his best impulses might urge him, but tried to do some deed of splendid devotion.

VII.

As Sir Launfal mused with a downcast face,
A light shone round about the place;
The leper no longer crouched at his side,
305 But stood before him glorified,
Shining and tall and fair and straight
As the pillar that stood by the Beautiful Gate,[1]—
Himself the Gate[2] whereby men can
Enter the temple of God in Man.[3]

VIII.

310 His words were shed softer than leaves from the pine,
And they fell on Sir Launfal as snows on the brine,[4]
Which mingle their softness and quiet in one
With the shaggy unrest they float down upon;
And the voice that was calmer than silence said,
315 "Lo, it is I, be not afraid!
In many climes, without avail,
Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail;
Behold it is here,—this cup which thou
Didst fill at the streamlet for me but now;
320 This crust is my body broken for thee,
This water His blood that died on the tree;
The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,
In whatso we share with another's need,—
Not that which we give, but what we share,—
325 For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who bestows himself with his alms feeds three,—
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me."

[1] See Acts iii. 2.
[2] See John x. 7.
[3] See 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.
[4] as snow falling into the sea.

IX.

Sir Launfal awoke,[1] as from a swound:—
"The Grail in my castle here is found!
330 Hang my idle armor up on the wall,
Let it be the spider's banquet-hall;
He must be fenced with stronger mail
Who would seek and find the Holy Grail."

X.

The castle-gate stands open now,[2]
335 And the wanderer is welcome to the hall
As the hangbird is to the elm-tree bough;
No longer scowl the turrets tall,
The Summer's long siege at last is o'er;[3]
When the first poor outcast went in at the door,
340 She entered with him in disguise,
And mastered the fortress by surprise;
There is no spot she loves so well on ground,
She lingers and smiles there the whole year round;
The meanest serf on Sir Launfal's land
345 Has hall and bower[4] at his command;
And there's no poor man in the North Countree
But is lord of the earldom as much as he.

[1] The story goes back to Sir Launfal on the rushes (l. 108).

[2] not as in the "Vision" (l. 117).

[3] See l. 119.

[4] The word was commonly enough used in the ballads for *chambers*.

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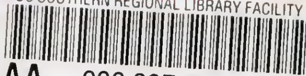

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